

TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDINGS OF PROJECTS AND  
PORTFOLIOS AT HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF  
FOREIGN LANGUAGES BASIC ENGLISH DIVISION

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## ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: Teachers Understandings of Projects and Portfolios at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division

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In the last 40 years, traditional approaches in writing instruction and assessment have moved towards alternative instruction and assessment. Many institutions are going through changes to keep up with the developments in the field of ELT. Changes are generally undertaken to improve the quality of teaching both for the teachers and the students. Teachers play an important role in the changes proposed by institutions. These changes may require a change in the teachers' practices. Teachers' understandings of these practices play a vital role in the innovations proposed to be undertaken.

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' understandings of using projects and portfolios during the implementation of the new writing program at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. By finding out the understandings of teachers towards the new writing program, its instruction and assessment tools, necessary improvements and changes can be prepared for the future of the program.

Data was first collected through questionnaires distributed to 34 teachers in the School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. The 40 questions in the questionnaire aimed at discovering the teachers' interest in teaching writing, and their understandings of traditional writing assessment, projects, assessment of projects, the portfolio, and assessment of the portfolio. Secondly, in order to gather more in-depth information about the teachers' understandings of the projects and the portfolio, interviews were conducted with five teachers and the director of the writing program. During the interviews, questions investigating the participants' general and institutional understandings of the projects and the portfolio, and their views on the new program were asked in order to collect more in-depth information.

Data collected through the questionnaire was analysed by employing descriptive statistics, such as frequencies and percentages. In order to support the results, the chi-square value of each question was also calculated using SPSS.

Data collected through the interviews were analysed qualitatively through categorization. The categories were based on the research questions and grouped as teachers' understanding of projects in general and in the institution, teachers' understanding of the portfolio in general and in the institution, and teachers' suggestions to improve the current writing program.

The analysis of the data revealed that the teachers believe the new program is a good beginning; however, there is no clear understanding of the new writing program's instruction and assessment tools, the project and the portfolio, or a consistent implementation of it among the staff. However, as this a new beginning, things can be improved through more in-depth teacher training.

MA THESIS EXAMINATION RESULT FORM

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The committee has decided that the thesis of the student is satisfactory.

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## CHAPTER 1

*If a new program works, teachers get little of the credit;  
if it fails, they get most of the blame.*

*Anonymous*

### Introduction

The present study addresses teachers' understandings of projects and portfolios for instruction and assessment purposes during the implementation of the new writing program at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. The study attempts to provide insight to teachers' understandings of projects and portfolios and their ideas and suggestions about the new writing program.

This chapter introduces the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, the research questions, and the significance of the study.

### Background of the Study

Change and evaluation in education are engaged in a cyclic relationship (Brown, 1995, Dickins and Germaine, 1992). They feed on and support each other. The purpose of evaluation is to make a decision about whether change is needed or whether an implemented change is successful. Dickins and Germaine (1992) see the motivation for evaluation as to gain information, to bring about an innovation or change, the term innovation implying a planned change. Evaluation and innovation are, therefore, closely related concepts, with evaluation forming a basis for a

subsequent change or modification within the curriculum. Innovation may be large in scale such as the implementation of a new program, or smaller in scale such as a new procedure for the assessment of writing skills.

Fullan (1991) calls the implementation of educational change "change in practice" (p. 52). All stakeholders have to take or be a part of the educational change, as it cannot be carried out by individuals. It is not a simple task to be engaged in and it requires the collaboration of many different groups. Stakeholders in the educational change process include administration, students, and teachers (Brown, 1995; Fullan, 1991).

Bolasco (1990) believes that successful change requires that those responsible for overseeing the implementation of change create situations which motivate the people taking part in the change, set clear goals and present a clear picture of expectations, and support the newly changed behavior by providing opportunities for practice and incentives for its success. If successful, substantive change is to occur, individuals must feel that there is a need for change, goals and standards for achieving the change must be devised, and the newly acquired skills need to be practiced and used continuously.

According to Fullan (1991), while considering the role of teachers, the difference between "the change" and "the change process" (p. 76) must be distinguished. The change is externally experienced, coming from the outside stakeholders, such as the university or the program administration; the change process, on the other hand, is internally experienced by those implementing the change and receiving the feedback resulting from the change. Fullan argues that the

changes that teachers are required to implement may not succeed if teachers do not share the decision makers' understanding of the change. Because change as a process is so complex, it is critical for the people carrying out the change or supporting the change to understand and take in the dynamics of the change process (Fullan, 1991, Osborne, 1993).

Change is a difficult period for teachers, as they are the ones carrying out the process of change. Fullan (1991) believes that:

Whenever or wherever there is change, individuals go through a period of reluctance; their previous habitual actions that once were a routine, which gave feelings of harmony and security, become replaced with uncertainty and fear (p. 352).

The outcome of educational change depends on what teachers' understandings of the change and their practices based on that understanding is (Sarason, 1971).

#### Statement of the Problem

Writing instruction and assessment have undergone considerable changes over the last thirty-five years (Raimes, 1991, Tchudi, 1991). Writing instruction was based on grammar drills, worksheets and sentence diagramming as ways to improve composition in the classroom. However, there have been changes in the approach to writing. These changes in approach include process writing, journal reflections, projects, timed writing, whole language instruction, and portfolios (Russell, 1992, Tchudi, 1991, White, 1990). Teachers and researchers have come to understand that only teaching grammar and giving feedback to student writings do not produce effective writers (Atwell, 1990, Graves, 1983, Raimes, 1991).

Rossi, Freeman and Lipsey (1999) point out that parallel to these changes in writing practices in recent years, measurement of writing performance has moved towards alternative assessments, such as student diaries, self-assessment check lists, projects, and portfolios. Today in many writing classes, using projects and portfolios has become a common technique to check and assess student development. Although many teachers use projects and portfolios for instruction and assessment purposes, many of them may not have a clear understanding of what a project and a portfolio really is.

According to Mabry (1999), projects are:

a specialized, often interdisciplinary inquiry devised and undertaken by a student or a group of students. Project work results in personalized (and perhaps new) knowledge, individual skills, understated skills, and professional-like motivation skills (p. 18).

Mabry also defines the portfolio as:

give a broad view of his or her achievement. A a collection of information by and about a student to portfolio contains samples of student work in one or more areas and may also contain narrative descriptions, grades or other evaluations by teachers and others, students' reflection or self-evaluation, and suggestions for future work (p. 17).

The writing program teachers of Hacettepe University Department of Foreign Languages Basic English Division have been a part of an important change process in order to improve the quality of the writing program. At the end of the 2000-2001 educational year, writing program teachers conducted an evaluation on the writing papers of the students. From the evaluation, they found that students were able to construct academic essays; however, they had problems with the language they

produced while writing. Based on the evaluation, the director of the program decided to add new practices to the instruction and assessment of the writing, including using projects and a portfolio. The changes have been carried out within 2001-2002 academic year and the teaching of writing is now based on the use of these new instruction and assessment tools. As the program and the practices are new, it may be useful to carry out a research to find out the teachers' understandings of the projects and portfolios used in the new program.

#### Purpose of the Study

The present study is an attempt to explore teachers' understanding of projects and portfolios now used for writing instruction and assessment, and the teachers' feelings and suggestions about the new writing program at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. As the program is new, not many studies exist specifically on this topic; the findings would contribute to helping the improvement of the program.

This study is site and situation specific. The study attempts to provide insight from the teachers' point of view regarding the change during the implementation of the writing program change at the Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. The study will also attempt to identify significant issues from the understandings of the teachers as well as from that of the overseer of change for the implementation of the new writing program.



### Research Questions

The present study addresses the following research questions:

- 1) What are the teachers' understandings of the new instruction and assessment procedures of the writing program being implemented at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages English Division?
  - a) What are the teachers' understanding of the projects?
  - b) What are the teachers' understanding of the portfolios?
- 2) What are the teachers' ideas and suggestions about the new writing program?

### Significance of the Study

Describing and documenting teachers' understandings regarding the implementation of the program and use of new instructional and assessment tools (projects and portfolios) will assist other administrators involved in similar situations. This study will help institutions get an insight on the teachers' understanding of the change, and the importance of teachers' understandings while going through changes, applying new practices and thereby providing benefit to their students. The study will contribute to the literature on teachers' responses to changes. Furthermore, the study may also trigger further research on how the learners perceive the use of the alternative assessments.

Through this study, the administration of Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division will have an understanding of its teachers' view of program change and will be able to improve the program, which will help the teachers to teach and assess writing more effectively.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

#### Introduction

This study examines teachers' understandings of using projects and portfolios for instruction and assessment, during the implementation of the new writing program at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. In order to provide the appropriate background introducing the literature related to the study is essential.

This chapter reviews the literature on educational change and the role of teachers, assessment, writing instruction and assessment, alternative assessment, alternative writing assessment, projects, portfolios, and research on projects and portfolios.

#### Educational Change

Education is simply a change activity as educational circumstances are constantly changing. Marzano (1995) states that one of the constants within education is that there will always be someone who is trying to change it; a new practice, a new program, will always be proposed so that education can be changed for the better. Changing for the better is generally the aim of all educational institutions. Whatever role they play, all educators at any level seek to improve the status quo. Dickins and Germaine (1992) assert that change in education should be based on an evaluation if the desired outcomes are to be attained. Change and evaluation for education is a recurring

process as they form the basis of one another (Brown, 1995, Dickins & Germaine, 1992).

Fullan (1991) believes that change in procedures and practices may take place at any level in the organizational structure, yet teachers are the ones who are required to implement these new procedures or practices. So, the key to successful change is considered to be in the common sense of the teachers. Fullan asserts that teachers shape the path to successful change through changing their previous procedures and practices in response to the needs of programs. The implementation of these new procedures and practices causes a change in the educational system of the institution where it is applied, and in the practices of teachers who are going to take part in the application process. For change to be successful the stakeholders taking part in the process must understand the process of change and see its benefits (Fullan, 1991, Brown, 1995). For educational change to take place, teachers have to take part in the course of the change. Continuing with Fullan's words:

if there is to be an educational change it will require individuals who are a part of the change process to learn new skills, change their set behaviors and question their beliefs. People cannot be forced to change; individuals cannot be made to think differently or be imposed upon to develop new skills. The impact of an innovation will be limited unless a deeper change in the thinking of the individuals takes place. For substantive change to occur, each individual teacher must work through the change process so that it has personal meaning for him or her. Neglecting to understand how individuals experience the change process is the primary reason (school) reforms are unsuccessful. Educational change depends on what teachers do and think (Fullan, 1991, p.117-118).

According to Hall and Hord (as cited in Fullan, 1991), applying something new, changing a practice requires effort and a lot of work on the part of the person taking part in the process. Teachers tend to have concerns about the new practices when they are faced with a need to change the ones they are used to. This may prevent them from adapting to change and may result in questioning of the change process.

Change can be more successful, if the concerns of teachers are considered. The importance of the personal side of change, especially from the perspective of the front line user, the teacher, ... will largely determine whether or not the change occurs in classrooms" (p.53).

The classroom is the environment where the implementation of the change takes place. If teachers are not given time to adjust and become a part of this process, the change will only be taking place at the administrative level.

Lortie (as cited in Fullan, 1991) conducted a widely cited study of what teachers do and think. Lortie based his study on 94 interviews with a stratified sample of elementary and secondary school teachers in the greater Boston area (called the Five Town sample), questionnaires to almost 6,000 teachers in Dade County, Florida, and various national and local research studies by others. Among the Five Town teachers, Lortie found that 62 of the 98 reasons for complaints given by teachers "dealt with loss of time or the distraction of work flow" (p. 178) caused by a change process. It can be clearly observed through the research results that teachers have a tendency to see the change process as a distraction causing a loss of time and an effort, requiring even greater amounts of work on their parts.

Fullan (1991) claims that as educators dream about changing education for the better, they must include instruction and assessment in their plans and see them as the main

instrument of their reforms. The next section will look more closely at assessment in education.

### Assessment

The purpose of education and educators is to make a difference, to enable students to achieve the school's, the society's and, most important of all their goals and objectives (Fullan, 1991, Linn & Gronlund, 2000). Based on this assumption, education can be described as a change activity, as educational circumstances and current knowledge of students are constantly changing (Brown, 1995, Fullan, 1991, Linn & Gronlund, 2000). The idea of current knowledge implies what a student knows cannot be fixed and that we should make judgments about student achievement through comparisons over a period of time (Brown, 1995; Linn & Gronlund, 2000, Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998). Teachers cannot predict the change in students' knowledge nor can they foresee the end results of the teaching process. What they can do to gather information is to assess students. All teachers have a desire to know student attainment. Linn and Gronlund (2000) define assessment as the full range of procedures used to gather information about student learning, including "observations, ratings of performances, projects or paper-pencil tests and teacher's 'value judgments' concerning the learning process "(p.31).

Assessment has an impact on everything and everyone in the educational system (Brown, 1995, Linn & Gronlund, 2000, Munby, 1999). Munby (1999) believes that assessment is not only useful for monitoring student achievement but also for improving the quality of educational programs. The evaluation of student progress points out the strengths and weaknesses of a program.

As the first step of curriculum planning, evaluations of student performances are very important. Teachers or curriculum planners base their assumptions on these performances. Brown (1995) believes that concrete information about students' performances is essential for teachers and administrators, because course planning is generally based on this performance. Munby (1999) adds to this idea by saying that after planning and implementation, institutions have to keep track of student development to make sure that the change action is a correct one. Assessment procedures change in time in accordance with the needs of the institution. What works as assessment in one particular setting may not result in the same desired way in another context. Teaching practices may be altered or changed in accordance with the program's and the institution's needs (Brown, 1995, Linn & Gronlund, 2000, Munby, 1999, Ornstein & Hunkins, 1998).

Brown (1995) believes that in any classroom situation, both teachers and students should know what they are achieving in terms of learning and teaching. Learners want to see some record of their performance and their development. For both of these reasons, assessment is very important. Assessment shows teachers and administrators how much their students have achieved and which subjects students did not learn. Assessment gives teachers, administrators, parents, and students important feedback on whether the students are achieving their goals or not.

#### Writing Instruction and Assessment

There has been a change going on in the field of instruction and assessment in writing since the beginning of the 70s (Raimes 1991, Tchudi, 1991). Raimes (1991) indicated a number of different approaches that have been used since the mid 1950's.

One of these is mainly based on the audio-lingual method. Exercises such as sentence drills - substitutions, fill-ins, sentence completions, and transformations- became everything about writing. Content was spoon-fed to the student. Then, at beginning of the 1960's, sentence drill exercises lost their importance and were replaced with passages of connected discourse. These types of exercises gave students an opportunity to use the required linguistic forms in a provided text. Writing teachers were given a new role to teach grammar, through error correction to help students to write correct and suitable sentences and essays and essay construction. There was not any distinction between writing and grammar lessons. Teachers provided students with mechanical grammar exercises before starting off writing. Eventually, teachers realized the fact that this way was not as effective as desired in bringing into being effective writers (Atwell, 1990, Graves, 1983).

Before the 1970's writing instruction and assessment was considered to be all about the product gained at the end of the process, which was also labeled as traditional writing emphasizing error correction. As the finished products of students' writing were given the most importance, this style of instruction and assessment was called the product writing approach. In a typical product-oriented classroom, teachers outlined, and described the various features of an essay in general terms and then the students were assigned a topic. The sole assignment of students was to write at home on an assigned task and submit it to the teacher. Then, these were evaluated based on spelling, grammar, and punctuation as well as a final comment at the end summarizing the performance of the students (Applebee, 1986; Williams, 1998).

In the product writing approach the teacher has more active role than the students. Williams (1998) and Reid (2001) highlighted the active role of a teacher in this approach, considering it a teacher-centred pedagogy, because of the fact that the teacher had the central role. Williams (1998) believes that the product approach inhibited the students' creativity and kept them distant from group work.

However, another approach emerged as a reaction to the former product writing approach, consisting of analysing examples of good form, learning the rules of constructing these forms, and practicing the rules. What is more important in this approach is the process itself rather than the finished product. According to Williams (1998) teachers started changing their activities due to the fact that they felt discontented with the product approach. The process of writing, making meaning and construction of writing gained more importance over the product.

Liebman-Kleine (1986) stated that process writing approach helped teachers to see writing in a new way, let them question the composing process and help them see the difference between product and process. In the process model of writing, the students improve their writing with the help of the suggestions and advice from the teacher. As opposed to traditional approaches, process writing emphasizes understanding and assists students to develop the writing process. The process model of writing takes students through certain phases starting with pre-writing, free writing, peer feedback, and revision (Applebee, 1986, Gage, 1986, Reid, 2001, Williams, 1998).

In this approach the traditional roles of both teachers and students changed. For Zamel (1976) the teacher, as facilitator, should not assign specific topics, give evaluative criteria for judging writing, demonstrate writing models or assign grammatical



exercises. Applebee (1986) reports that process-writing teachers use procedures such as helping students to think and organise their ideas before writing, and rethink and revise their initial drafts. The students involved in small groups helping and sharing with each other and the teacher assists them during the process by giving advice and suggestions. Therefore, students are provided more time and chance to decide on their own topics, generate ideas, write drafts, go over them, and give feedback to each other. This makes the organisational aspect of writing more important than linguistic accuracy. (Bizzel, 1986, Kameen, 1986, Myers, 1997, Raimes, 1991).

According to Raimes (1991), in the instruction of writing, students' should be given the opportunity to get across their ideas instead of thinking their linguistic mistakes. Pennington (1993) states that the process approach offered teachers who had difficulties in their writing classes a more natural teaching-learning environment, aiming to help students use their writing abilities both in and out of the classroom. Pennington asserts that before the emergence of process writing approach, teacher did not have any idea on how to instruct their students in writing. By using process approach, teachers teach their students every step they have to take while composing. Dyer (1996) believes that with the help of the process writing model, students learn to write by writing, and in doing so they become better writers. In moving from a product model to process model, the students may claim their independence, their learner autonomy may be cherished for their writing and are given the opportunity to work cooperatively with each other while drafting, revising, giving and receiving feedback (Pennington, 1993). If, however, students learn that writing is a process through which they can explore their thoughts and ideas, then product is likely to improve as well (Zamel, 1982). In line with the change of students' roles within the

process approach to writing, the teacher's role is accordingly changing with the process approach as well.

According to Raimes (1991) structure or grammar has lost importance in time and content, and the organization of the content has become more important. Raimes proposes that writing instruction and assessment have been changing continuously as there has been rapid growth in research, which has improved the assessment of student writing. Process writing, journal reflections, timed writing have stepped in as modern methods. It is now clear that no one method for teaching and assessing writing effectively can be accepted as audiences and objectives differ from writer to writer (White, 1990). Raimes (1991) believes that the topic of writing, its instruction, and its assessment still an important issue for teachers, administrators, and researchers. For Williams (1998) the job of a writing teacher is much more difficult than any other since the assessment of writing is not an easy task, as it requires more time and 'complex array of variables' (p.259). While different approaches in the instruction of writing gain life in the field of language teaching, different approaches in the assessment field naturally emerge as well.

#### Alternative Assessment

Alternative instruction and assessment are one of the most debated issues of language teaching, as there has been a move from traditional assessment towards direct assessment of student performance in recent years. Efforts to develop useful alternatives to traditional testing modes have increased during the past several years (Worthen, White, Fan, & Sudweeks, 1999).

Alternative assessment is like an umbrella term that covers a broad range of approaches to assessing what students know and can do. Different labels are being used

to refer to alternative assessments. Linn and Gronlund (2000) refer to alternative assessments as “performance assessments” or “authentic assessments”, and they claim that although these labels reflect subtle differences, they are all alternatives to traditional assessment.

According to Khattri and Sweet (1996), alternative assessment refers to a type of assessment that requires students to actually perform, demonstrate, construct or develop a product or a solution under defined conditions and standards. For Khattri and Sweet, the characteristics of alternative assessments should be that students be required to structure the assessment task, apply information, construct responses, and be able to explain the processes they went through while arriving at the answers. Khattri and Sweet identify five different varieties of alternative assessments.

1. Portfolios that consist of collections of a student’s work and developmental products, which may include drafts of assignments.
2. On-demand tasks or events that require students to construct responses - either writing or experiments - to a prompt or to a problem within a short period of time.
3. Projects that last longer than on-demand tasks, and are usually undertaken by students on a given topic and used to demonstrate their mastery of the topic.
4. Demonstrations that take the form of student presentations or project work.
5. Teachers’ observations that gauge student classroom performance, usually designed for learners, and primarily used for diagnostic purposes (p.12).

Khattri and Sweet believe that these different types of alternative assessments require a student to make or develop a product or a solution while performing or

demonstrating a certain task. These tasks, different from traditional types of assessment, require the student to take active part and reach a solution individually while being able to observe and comment on the developmental process of reaching the solution.

#### Alternative Writing Assessment

There has been greater emphasis on writing assessment in the past thirty-five years, and the research has made teachers and researchers more aware of the difficulties involved in designing fair and appropriate assessment tools to determine the students' writing abilities. It is now better realized that no approach to writing assessment is without problems. Recent research has pointed out that different types of assessment are better in different instructional contexts, as student abilities, teachers purposes, and instructional objectives differ (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Recent changes in writing instruction have resulted in changes in writing assessment. According to O'Malley and Valdez Pierce (1996) these new changes have changed what is assessed, how assessment is conducted, the teacher's role in bringing together assessment with instruction, and the student's role as a participant in assessment and instruction. Mabry (1999) believes that teachers have, always done performance assessment in assessing student's writing, so some of the new methods are continuations or revisions of long-standing practice. These techniques have been a part of the teaching practice for many years. Huerta-Macias (1995) lists alternative writing assessment procedures as journals, reading logs, role-plays, discussion work samples, and teacher observations. Brown and Hudson (1998) enlarge the list by adding project-based assessment, portfolios, conferences and diaries.

One form of alternative writing assessment, which has received attention from language educators and researchers, is the use of projects.

## Projects

As projects are becoming very popular, increasing numbers of teachers and schools have been using and fitting projects into their curriculum. According to Mabry (1999) projects are generally a topic or a question assigned by the teacher to the students, resulting in new knowledge through the research carried out. Projects may be group or individual works, and they increase the motivation and the self-esteem of the students. Khattri and Sweet (1996) add to the definition of a project by saying that it may be an investigation of various topics that the student will need and use in their future lives and meet the needs of the program. During project work, many processes and skills useful for daily activities, such as solving problems, sharing responsibility for carrying out plans, making suggestions to one another, are developed. According to Wrigley (1998), steps in preparing an efficient project include selecting a topic, making plans, researching, developing a product, and sharing results with others. The main element of project-based learning is group work; so establishing a trusting, cooperative relationship is also necessary before starting project instruction. Activities that engage learners in communication tasks and in “peer”- and “self” evaluation help create the proper classroom environment (Wrigley, 1998, p.13). Mabry (1999) argues projects involve the application of different "intellectual, academic, and social skills and competencies" (p.18). He adds to the definition of a project by saying that projects help students become independent learners responsible for their actions and responsible to their peers.

### Purpose of Projects

The purpose of a project is to learn more about a topic rather than to find answers to questions posed by a teacher. According to Katz (1998) project work is

complementary to the system of the curriculum. Instruction helps students acquire skills, deals with motivation, and project work provides opportunities to apply skills, develop their proficiencies, and raise self-esteem as students produce. Katz continues by adding that projects differ from pre-selected topics, such as seasons or the weather, which consist of preplanned lessons and activities on these topics. Through projects, learners can do real investigations on a topic in a library or in the outer world.

According to Katz (1998) the main purpose of projects is to construct and acquire knowledge, develop basic intellectual and social skills, strengthen outlook, and develop positive feelings in students about themselves as learners and as participants in group work. Another purpose of projects mentioned by Fried-Booth (as cited in Moss & Van Duzer, 1998) is to help students use their knowledge of English outside the classroom. Projects require authentic use of language by the learners in situations that require communication, such as being part of a team or interviewing others. According to Lawrence (1997) when learners work in pairs or in teams, they need skills to plan, organize, negotiate, make their points, and arrive at a consensus about issues such as to what tasks to perform, who will be responsible for each task, and how information will be researched and presented. Because of the collaborative nature of project work, development of these skills occurs even among learners at low levels of language proficiency. Within the group work integral to projects, individuals' strengths and preferred ways of learning (e.g., by reading, writing, listening, or speaking) strengthen the work of the team as a whole.

In order to achieve the aims above, a project should reflect the interests and concerns of the learners. Moss (1998) claims that teachers should begin determining

project topics at the start of an instructional cycle by conducting a class needs assessment to identify topic areas and skills to be developed. As the teacher and learners talk about projects and get to know each other, new topics and issues may arise that are appropriate for project learning. For Moss (1998), a project may focus on the objectives of one instructional unit, such as a unit on education, or it may go on for several units covering related topics.

Projects help students make use of and develop their language skills. However, Lawrence (1997) asserts that before giving learners big projects, introducing them to self-evaluation and peer evaluation first is advisable as projects aim to develop self-esteem. Lawrence gives examples of self and peer evaluation by stating:

Learners can evaluate themselves and each other through role plays, learner-to-learner interviews, and writing activities. They can become familiar with completing evaluation forms related to general class activities, and they can write about their learning in weekly journals where they reflect on what they learned, how they felt about their learning, and what they need to continue to work on in the future. They can even identify what should be evaluated and suggest how to do it (p. 5).

After defining the purpose of a project, the assessment procedures should be decided on. For the assessment of the projects, Lawrence (1997) believes that teachers can observe the skills and knowledge that learners use, and the ways they use language during the project. Learners can reflect on their own work and that of their peers, how well the team works, how they feel about their work and progress, and what skills and knowledge they are gaining. Reflecting on work, checking progress, and identifying

areas of strength and weakness are part of the learning process. Assessment can also be done through small-group discussion with guided questions.

### Advantages and Disadvantages of Projects

Projects have advantages as instruction and assessment tools both for teachers and students. According to Katz (1998) projects build on previous work integrating speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills, improves students problem solving, negotiating and other interpersonal skills, and requires learners to engage in both independent and group work, taking responsibility for themselves and their classmates.

Moss (1998) adds to the list of advantages by saying that projects challenge learners to use English in new and different contexts outside the class, involves learners in choosing the focus of the project and in the planning process, engages learners in acquiring new information that is important to them. Lawrence (1997) expands the list by saying that projects lead to clear outcomes and incorporates self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and teacher evaluation.

Besides its advantages, Katz (1998) also mentions that projects have disadvantages, as they require careful planning and flexibility on the part of the teacher. Teachers with a heavy workload may see projects as burden. Katz asserts that as projects have a dynamic nature and should be unique to each class, problems cannot be anticipated. Moreover, sometimes a project will move forward in a different direction than originally planned.



### Projects Implemented at Hacettepe University

Projects used at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division are different from the ones presented above. The main aim of the projects used in the institution is to teach grammar while practicing writing. Grammar is given more importance than that of teaching writing. Another aim of the projects is that students can have more practice in terms of vocabulary and in terms of language. The director of the program gives a clear definition on what a project is and what it aims for in the institution. He asserts that:

Students had difficulty in expressing themselves in terms of grammar. As writing has some components one of them is language, vocabulary, and then organisation and then mechanics. For organisation we have a different book but for language we decided to prepare our students through these projects and we concentrated on very basic structures. You know tenses, modals, passives and then conjunctions what not. Our students unfortunately despite the projects have some problems in terms of the language. They know the organization they know mostly vocabulary how to use the vocabulary where to use them correctly, where to use the correct words but they still had the problem of you know actually let us say correct grammar that is why we decided to do projects that is the first reason. Second reason was that we prepared I guess and I hope a very guided materials so through those materials students were able to do very big brain storming in terms of vocab. and in terms of language. Because in general writing internationally let us say we do not have a concept like brain storming in terms of the grammar itself. There is a brainstorming you know you give the words, you give the ideas but what we were tried to do was brainstorming but the core was the grammar itself. I mean so let us say our first aim in the projects was to prepare our students in terms of the language itself.

Projects, as can be observed through the director's words, have a very different purpose and are practiced very differently from the definition of a project presented in literature. According to the literature for project work, the student has to carry out a research on a topic, gather information and prepare an essay on the topic. However, the one implemented at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division there is no research carried out. The students are handed out the pre-prepared projects and are required to work and practice from them.

### Portfolios

Portfolios are not a new concept, but interest has been renewed, due to the portfolio's perceived promise for both improving instruction and assessment and motivating and involving students in their own learning. The portfolio can be defined as a purposeful collection of student work telling the story of student achievement or growth. According to Mabry (1999), portfolios put together students work, which show their development over time. Mabry adding to this limited definition, pointed out the fact that there are portfolio systems, which promote student self-assessment and control of learning, show the student's abilities, build student self-confidence, and evaluate curriculum and instruction. Arter and Spandel (1991) further specify that portfolios can include student participation in the selection of the portfolio content, the guidelines for the selection, the criteria for judging success, and evidence of student self reflection. Linn and Gronlund (2000) compare the portfolio to a portrait of a student, which reflects his or her accomplishment. Through this, they call the portfolio a self-portrait, which has benefited from guidance and feedback from a teacher and sometimes from classmates.

For Venn (2000) the goal should be to help students bring together a portfolio that illustrates their own skills and abilities, represents their writing capabilities, and tells their stories of school achievement.

Portfolio is a record of student's process of learning. Arter and Spandel (1991) describe the portfolio as a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits to the student, or others, their efforts or achievement in one or more areas. According to Meisels and Steele (1991), portfolios enable students to participate in assessing their own work, keep track of individual learner's progress, and provide a basis for evaluating the quality of individual learner's overall performance.

According to Venn (2000) process and product portfolios represent the two major types of portfolios. A process portfolio documents the stages of learning and provides a progressive record of student growth. A product portfolio demonstrates mastery of a learning task or a set of learning objectives, and contains only the best work. Teachers use process portfolios to help students identify learning goals, document progress over time, and demonstrate learning mastery. Venn continues by saying that teachers prefer to use process portfolios because they are ideal for documenting the stages that students go through as they learn and progress through the teaching process.

#### Purposes of a Portfolio

The purpose of a portfolio is very important when designing the portfolio. Without a clear understanding of the purpose, portfolios are no different from unorganized collections of the materials students have prepared. Arter and Spandel (1991) argue that there are two main purposes of a portfolio, which are student assessment and instruction. They claim that good assessment is an important part of the

teaching process and believe that the emphasis is likely to be different when the primary purpose is assessment than when the only purpose is instruction.

Venn's process and product portfolios reflect different purposes. As Linn and Gronlund (2000) note, the process portfolios can be used to demonstrate progress, where the product portfolios can be used to display current accomplishments. In terms of assessment, the former provides for formative evaluation of the student, while the latter allows a summative judgement.

Mabry (1999) argues that as there is no single correct way to do portfolios, and because they appear to be used for so many things, developing a portfolio system can be cause of confusion and stress, stemming from the fact that portfolios are a means to an end and not an end in themselves. More specifically, Mabry continues by explaining that confusion occurs when there is no clarity on the purpose to be served by the portfolio and the specific skills to be developed or assessed by the portfolio.

Decisions about what items to place in a portfolio should be based on the purpose of the portfolio. Without a purpose, a portfolio is just a folder of student work. The portfolio exists to make sense of learner's work, to communicate about their work, and to relate the work to a larger context (Arter & Paulson, 1991; Paulson & Paulson, 1991).

According to Murphy and Smith (1990), portfolios can be intended to motivate students, to promote learning through reflection and self-assessment, and to be used in evaluations of students' thinking and writing processes and assessment. Murphy and Smith state that as portfolios are collections of multiple samples of student work, over time they enable teachers to get a broader look at what students know and can do, and be able to base assessment on more real life practice.

An assessment portfolio is the systematic collection of student work measured against predetermined scoring criteria. According to O'Malley and Valdez Pierce (1996) these criteria may include 'scoring guides', 'rubrics', 'check lists', or 'rating scales' (p.35). The items that may be included in an assessment portfolio differ. Venn (2000) asserts that in the steps of the portfolio assessment process, first, the teacher and the student need to clearly identify the portfolio contents, which can be samples of student work, reflections, and teacher observations. Second, the teacher should develop assessment procedures for keeping track of the portfolio contents and for grading the portfolio. Third, the teacher needs a plan for holding portfolio conferences with the students, as they encourage reflective teaching and learning. These conferences are an essential part of the portfolio assessment process and can be formal and informal meetings in which students review their work and discuss their progress.

Meisels and Steele (1991) suggest the material in a portfolio should be organized by chronological order and category. If all information in the portfolio is dated, arranging the entries becomes a simpler task both for the teacher and the student. Meisels and Steele continue their suggestions by adding the idea that further organizing the material according to curriculum area or category of development helps the teacher follow attainment of the instructional goals and objectives.

Once the portfolio is organized, the teacher can see the student's achievement. Students can compare current work with their earlier work. Mabry (1999) believes that this organization can indicate the student's progress toward a standard of performance that is consistent with the curriculum and the developmental expectations. Venn (2000)

highlights the fact that portfolios are not meant to be used for comparing one student with the other, but that they should be used to document individual student's progress over time. The teacher's conclusions about a student's achievement, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, and needs should be based on the full range of that student's development, as documented by the data in the portfolio, and on the teacher's knowledge of curriculum and stages of development.

Portfolios, if defined as collections of work stored in folders over a period of time, will have little value either to students or teachers. In order to be useful, careful consideration needs to be given to what goes into a portfolio, the process of selection, and how the information is to be used (Krest, 1990; Valencia, 1990). If this is not done, then the portfolio may become little more than a folder.

#### Advantages and Disadvantages of the Portfolio

Portfolios are believed to have a number of potential strengths. Linn and Gronlund (2000) believe that as portfolios can easily be integrated with the instruction, teachers find them appealing. Being able to carry on the assessment continuously through the portfolio and keeping it in pace with the teaching process makes the portfolio a preferable tool for teachers.

According to Venn (2000), the advantages of the portfolio are that it promotes student self-evaluation, reflection, and critical thinking while measuring performance based on genuine samples of the students work. Venn continues by saying that portfolios enable teachers and students to share the responsibility for setting learning goals and evaluating progress toward meeting those goals while providing flexibility in measuring

how students accomplish their learning goals, creating the opportunity for the student to put extensive input into the learning process. Portfolios also provide opportunities for students and teachers to discuss learning goals and the progress toward those goals in structured and unstructured meetings.

Mabry (1999) adds to the list of advantages by saying that portfolios facilitate cooperative learning activities, including peer evaluation and tutoring, cooperative learning groups, and peer conferencing. Mabry points out the fact that portfolios provide a process for structuring learning in stages enabling measurement of different dimensions of a student's progress by including different types of data and materials.

Although portfolios have many advantages both for instruction and assessment, portfolios also have weaknesses. Venn (2000) argues that portfolios require extra time for planning an assessment system and to conduct the assessment, and gathering all of the necessary data and work samples makes portfolios difficult to manage for teachers. Linn and Gronlund (2000) also claim that portfolios require great amount of work time while assessing and giving feedback to student work. In addition they note that developing a systematic and deliberate management system is difficult, but this step is necessary in order to make portfolios more than a random collection of student work. Scoring portfolios involves the extensive use of subjective evaluation procedures such as rating scales and professional judgment, and this limits reliability. Scheduling individual portfolio conferences poses difficulty and the length of each conference may interfere with other instructional activities.

### The Portfolio Implemented at Hacettepe University

The portfolio implemented at Hacettepe University Basic English Division had two main purposes. One purpose was to see the development of the students and the other was to see whether the program was working. The director of the program explains the purpose of the portfolio as:

It was the first year so I myself wanted to see what was going on. That is why all of our teachers kept portfolios and sometimes we looked at those portfolios and the students' written work so we tried to see where we were going. Did it work or did it need any modifications you know any changes or the most important question was if we had to continue or stop. So after we saw in the portfolios we decided our students were ready for the new book basically organisation.

The purpose of the portfolio and its aims are clearly specified by the director. The portfolio being implemented was planned to be used both for the students and the institution. It included students' works and the projects and each project entry was assessed.

### Studies on Projects and Portfolios

Moss and Van Duzer (1998) commented on the study conducted at the Arlington Education and Employment Program (AEEP) in Virginia by a team of teachers who designed and implemented several projects for their students, ranging from literacy level advanced to pre-TOEFL. They developed a framework for projects including learning strategies and affective behaviors that have a positive effect on progress and language learning. The two projects described below, developed by AEEP staff, illustrate the range and complexity of project work.



In one of the projects, parents in a family literacy program and their elementary school children created a coloring and activity book of community information for families living in their neighborhood in Arlington, Virginia. All of the parents and learners took part in brainstorming sessions. They selected information, text, and graphics topics for each page of the book and contributed to the creation of the pages. Parents in the intermediate level class managed the production of the book and researched the topics selected (e.g., immunization, school). The adult literacy class located addresses and phone numbers of local agencies that provided the needed services and illustrated a shopping guide of local stores they liked. They also designed a page of emergency telephone numbers. Learners worked on drawings and activity pages for their peers. When the book was completed, the families presented it to the principal of the local elementary school. Some of the families participated in a "Meet the Authors" day at the local library.

Parents and learners alike kept their work in portfolios and completed assessment questionnaires. They shared their evaluations with each other and explained why they evaluated themselves the way they did. The teachers evaluated the parents on language skills, team participation, and successful completion of tasks.

In another project, learners in an advanced intensive ESL class worked in pairs to present a thirty-minute lesson to other classes in the program. They worked collaboratively to determine the needs of their audience, interview teachers, choose topics, conduct research, prepare lessons, practice, offer evaluations to other teams during the rehearsal phase, present their lessons, and evaluate the effort. Topics ranged from ways to get rid of cockroaches to how the local government works.

Before the lesson planning began, learners identified lesson objectives and evaluation criteria. They shared ideas on what makes a presentation successful, considering both language and presentation skills.

In addition, the teachers and learners in the classes receiving the presentations wrote evaluations of the lessons. The presenters also wrote an evaluation essay reflecting on their own work and the value of the project itself.

The study conducted by Forgette-Giroux and Simon (2000) explored problems that arose when implementing portfolio assessment in eleven classrooms. For this study, portfolio assessment was defined as an ongoing collection of entries that were selected and commented on by the student, the teacher and/or peers, to assess the student's progress in the development of a competency. Eleven volunteer teachers from five schools in Eastern Ontario, Canada took part in the study. All teachers were each visited twice from February to May during the year. The visits consisted of two in-class observations of portfolio use, followed by a 30 to 45 minute semi-structured interview with each teacher. The results suggested the formulation of three sets of research hypotheses. The first hypothesis suggests that the portfolio assessment implementation process involves four types of organizational issues: 'temporal', 'spatial', 'human' and 'contextual'. Temporal issues concern time spent on planning and scheduling portfolio assessment related activities and their relation to the existing teaching and assessment practices. Spatial issues deal with organizing the portfolio's format, physical characteristics, storage, and access. Human aspects include role-sharing such responsibilities as establishing and updating a table of contents, dating and sorting portfolio entries, reflection, and marking for formative or summative assessment

purposes. Finally, contextual matters have to do with specifying the object of assessment, determining the scope of disciplines from which portfolio items are selected, and establishing their quantity and quality.

The differences among the participant teachers regarding organizational problems suggested a second hypothesis: In implementing portfolio assessment within their classroom, teachers fall along a 'three or four stage continuum' (p. 99). Novice teachers tend to loosely plan and schedule a rather unfocussed collection of best work across subjects. Mainly, the teacher controls storage, access, and maintenance. Entries are collected and assessed separately. At the next stage of the continuum, the collection of student work still remain largely under the responsibility of the teacher, but now contains evidence related to the development of a few more or less specified skills or competencies. Students have input in deciding portfolio format, access and storage, and their reflections on and determination of their level of competency are based primarily on the comparison of first drafts to final products within individual assignments. In the final stages, portfolio assessment empowers students to select a minimum number of entries from a variety of contexts in order to provide evidence of the development of all five learning dimensions associated with one or a few clearly expressed skills. Students regularly reflect on and judge their progress using structured prompts and scales that encourage the checking of relation among the portfolio contents.

The data from this study also indicates that particular location and movement of the teachers on the implementation continuum may be a function of variables such as "willingness to empower students, previous portfolio experience, administrative expectations, training, support and guidance, level, and discipline being taught" (p.100).

It can be concluded that three factors affect the implementation process of the portfolio within the classroom: the teacher, the level of professional development, and the teaching environment. This study suggests that portfolio's assessment, purpose, and context, and its successful implementation may depend particularly on the extent to which teachers accept that portfolio assessment integrates learning and assessment activities, obtain training specifically related to the purpose, focus, nature, and context, recognise that students are capable and responsible decision-makers with interest in self-assessing their own learning, learn to better manage the their time they spend on assessment.

Bushman and Schnitker (n.d.) conducted a study at Bowling Green State University on teacher attitudes to portfolio assessment, implementation, and practicability. The study consisted of a survey of 31 professional educators to determine their knowledge and attitudes concerning the use of portfolios as an assessment tool and was done through a questionnaire asking Likert-type questions. Fifty two percent of the respondents felt that they had not received adequate training on portfolio use. Eighty eight percent favored the use of portfolios, and most respondents identified practical problems with portfolio use including inadequate training and time management. The survey findings suggested that teachers see portfolios as an effective means of addressing students progress, strengths, and weaknesses, but that increased training is needed to accomplish these goals.

A study conducted by Wolfe, Chiu, and Reckase (1999) investigated how teachers' perceptions of portfolio implementation barriers changed when they participated in this one year study. The study was conducted in 14 schools with 12

teachers from each school. The results of the study were analyzed with a Rasch-Rating scale model. Results suggested that, firstly, teachers who were unfamiliar with concepts relating to portfolio assessment were likely to be apprehensive about using portfolios in their classrooms than teachers who were already familiar with the concepts. Secondly, teachers who were less familiar with portfolio assessment may also underestimate the difficulties that they would have as they attempted to implement the portfolio assessment system. Thirdly, the teachers' concerns on the amount of time and the difficulty of scoring portfolios were unchanged over time. The amount of time and the difficulty of scoring portfolios were also unchanged over time. The amount of time and the difficulty of scoring were the most important issues for the teachers.

Another indication of the study was that different types of teachers might need different kinds of assistance and training to facilitate their use of the portfolio. Inexperienced teachers and teachers for whom the connection between course content and the focus and the purpose of the portfolio assessment was less clear were more likely to avoid using the portfolio. These teachers needed more assistance and training from experienced teachers and test developers and the support of the administration. This assistance should focus on helping inexperienced teachers plan and managing class time that was devoted to portfolio assessment.

An important study on teachers' perceptions of portfolio assessment was conducted by Johns and Leirsburgh (1992) on two teacher groups. One group was familiar with the idea of portfolio assessment and had carried out one, and the other had no information on it. For both groups timing, planning portfolio contents, purpose and how the evaluation should be carried out were matters of concern. The group which had

received proper training and had experience preferred using portfolios as assessment tools. However, the inexperienced group was hesitant in using portfolios and preferred other types of assessment.

Research indicates that teachers are generally positive towards project and portfolio instruction and assessment, and believe that they may be more beneficial for students than other practices. However, as the research indicates, proper training and experience on using portfolios is very important for the success of the implementation of the portfolio.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study is to find out teachers' understandings of projects and portfolios as tools for writing instruction and assessment, as well as what the teachers' ideas and suggestions about the new writing program are at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division.

This chapter outlines the methodology selected for this study and explains the rationale for selecting such methodology. The sections below describe participants, materials and instruments, the procedures and data collection, and finally data analysis.

#### Participants

The data for this study was collected through questionnaires and interviews. There are 120 teachers working at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. Of these teachers, 70 have participated in the new program from the beginning.

From these 70 teachers, 15 were randomly selected for participating in the piloting of the questionnaires given. Of the 15 pilot questionnaires distributed, 10 were returned. The revised questionnaires were distributed to the remaining 55 teachers, and 34 of these questionnaires were returned. This formed the basis of the

quantitative data. From the 34 teachers who answered the questionnaire, 5 randomly selected teachers along with the director of the program were interviewed.

The background information about the participants who returned the questionnaire is presented in Table 1 as follows:

Table 1

Total years teaching experience	Less than 1 year	1- 5	6-10	11-15	16-20	Above 20
Nos. of teachers	-	10	11	8	-	5

Teaching experience at Hacettepe University	Less than 1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	10-15 years
Nos. of Teachers	-	20	13	1

Teaching experience in writing at Hacettepe University	Less than 1 year	1-5 years	6-10 years	10-15 years
Nos. of Teachers	-	17	13	1

### Materials and Instruments

In this study, the data was collected through a questionnaire and teacher interviews.

#### Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed to find out teachers' understandings of teaching writing, traditional writing assessment, projects, assessment of projects, the portfolio, and assessment of the portfolio. Questionnaires are important instruments of research and tools for data collection. As pointed out by Oppenheim (1993), the reasons for using a questionnaire as a research instrument is that it requires little time,



there is no extended writing, is easy to process, makes group comparisons easy and is useful for testing specific hypotheses.

The questionnaire (See Appendix B) was made up of three parts. In part A, knowledge of the participants' background was sought. Part B of the questionnaire consisted of 40, 5-point Likert-scale type questions. The choices ranged on a five-point scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This section of the questionnaire aimed to find out teachers' understanding of writing, traditional assessment, projects, assessment of the projects, portfolios, and the assessment of the portfolio.

The third part of the questionnaire had 6 open-ended questions (see appendix A). The open-ended questions section of the questionnaire aimed to find out the teachers' understanding of the purposes of the projects and the portfolio, how the projects and the portfolio were assessed, what teachers felt should be included in a portfolio, and what teachers believe the assessment of writing should be done through. These questions aimed at directly investigating teachers' understandings of the projects and the portfolio.

### Interviews

Five teachers who answered the questionnaire were randomly selected to be interviewed, in addition to the director of the writing program. Questions investigating the participants' general and institutional understandings of the projects and the portfolio were asked in order to gather more in-depth information. The director of the program and the program teachers were asked different questions in the interview (see Appendices C and D). The reason for the difference in the questions was that the director of the program had prepared the program and had

more in-depth information on how things were prepared. According to Marshall and Rossman (1989), a well-conducted interview can produce rich, in depth data. When using the interview, participants can clearly state their own thoughts, feelings and actions, which may allow the interviewer to get deeper meaning from the answers given. The contact between the interviewer and respondent allows the interviewer to gain insight about the subject. The interview was held in English because it is difficult to find the Turkish equivalents of the terms used and moreover all the teachers are fluent speakers of English.

#### Procedures

After deciding on the research questions, the decision on the data collection tools had to be made. The tools for the study were questionnaires and interviews. The main reason to use questionnaires was that the Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division writing program teachers were large in number. The best way to gather as much data from as many numbers of teachers as possible was to give out questionnaires. To be able to add depth to the results of the questionnaires, interviews were chosen as a second tool.

The questions for the questionnaire were constructed by the researcher, based on the research done for the study, so as to be able to gather information on the teachers' understandings of the projects and the portfolio. After the preparation of the questions, the questionnaires were piloted to 15 randomly selected teachers of the writing program.

The pilot questionnaires were given to the teachers by the researcher and were taken back 4 days later. 10 out of 15 questionnaires were returned and from the

results obtained, an explanation on the use of the projects and the portfolio was added to the introduction section of the questionnaire.

The questionnaires were then given to the 55 teachers of Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. The questionnaire was distributed to the teachers by the administrative coordinators of Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division on five consecutive days. The results were then collected from the coordinators by the researcher. Out of the 55 questionnaires distributed, 34 were returned.

After the collection of the questionnaires, based on the analysis of the responses given, the interview questions were organized. Again, the interview questions were piloted and after the piloting, two questions were revised. The first interview was done with the director of the program. Afterwards, the five randomly selected teachers were interviewed on two consecutive days. After the completion of the interviews, all six of them were transcribed (See Appendix E for the directors and the teachers' interviews).

#### Data Analysis

The data gathered from the questionnaires and the interviews were analyzed separately. The Likert Scale type questions were analysed by using frequencies and percentages. Then, their chi-squares were calculated by using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). One-way chi-square was used for analysis so as to be able to see the differences among the teachers and the responses given by them.

In order to present the data from the questionnaires, the items that were asked were regrouped according to their topics. The topics were grouped as teachers'

perceptions on liking teaching writing, teachers' understanding of traditional writing assessment, teachers' understanding of the projects, teachers' understandings of the assessment of the projects, teachers' understanding of the portfolio, and teachers' understandings of the assessment of the portfolio. Separate tables for each topic were prepared for the questions covering those topics.

Data gathered from the interviews were analyzed qualitatively. The interviews were all transcribed and categorized according to their subject matter. The categories were based on the research questions and grouped as teachers' understanding of projects in general and in the institution, teachers' understanding of the portfolio in general and in the institution, and teachers' suggestions and ideas to improve the current writing program. Comparisons were made between the program director's and the teachers' understandings of the projects and the portfolio as instruction and assessment tools.

## CHAPTER 4

### DATA ANALYSIS

#### Introduction

This study was done to find out teachers' understandings of using projects and portfolios during the implementation of the new writing program at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. Through the investigation of teachers' understandings of the projects and the portfolio, information on the new writing program would be attained.

This chapter is devoted to the presentation of the data and the analysis of the results. The presentation of the data, the analyses, and discussions are organized according to the procedures section of chapter three. The chapter is divided into two main sections: (a) data analysis procedures, and (b) results. In the data analysis procedures part, the statistical tool and methods that are used to analyze the data are presented. In the results part, the results of the questionnaires and the interviews are presented. For the questionnaire, tables are also used to illustrate the results.

#### Data Analysis Procedures and Tools

The data were collected through a questionnaire given to 34 writing teachers, and interviews conducted with five randomly selected English instructors from among those 34, as well as with the director of the writing program working at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. The data analysis procedures started with the questionnaire. The questionnaire consisted of three parts. The first part of the questionnaire asked questions on the background of the participants. The second part aimed to

elicit what teachers' understandings of projects and portfolios were, asking 40 Likert scale questions and six open-ended questions. Chi-square analysis was used to find out the significance of the responses to the Likert-scale questions.

Chi-square ( $\chi^2$ ) is a statistical analysis that is used with nominal level data. According to Coombs (1953), chi-square is:

Based on counts or frequencies of observations which fall into different (nominal) categories. Chi-square can be used to examine differences between the numbers of observations in the levels of one variable (a one way chi-square) or to determine whether there is a statistically significant relationship between two or more nominal variables (multi-way chi-square). The formula for all applications of the chi-square statistic is based on a comparison of observed frequencies with the frequencies expected if there are no differences between levels of variable or relationship between variables (p.56).

For the purposes of this study one-way chi-square was used to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire so as to be able to see differences among the teachers and their responses.

The answers given to the open-ended questions were collated and analyzed. These results will be reported with the questionnaire data.

## Results

In the first section of the results, the data gathered from the questionnaire was examined through chi-square analysis. The questions were grouped according to their topics and introduced through tables. The data gathered through the open-ended questions were also presented with the questionnaire results. In the second section, the data obtained through the interviews are presented.

### Questionnaire Results

The tables were organized according to the topics of the questions asked in the questionnaire. The questions were grouped under the headings of teachers' views on teaching writing, traditional writing assessment, teachers' understandings of the projects, assessment of projects, teachers' understandings of the portfolio, and assessment of the portfolio.

Table 2 presents the results for question 1, which looked at teachers' perceptions of liking teaching writing. A majority of the teachers stated that they liked teaching writing. However, a substantial number of teachers were uncertain.

Table 2

	SD/D	U	A/SA	Chi <sup>2</sup>
1. I like teaching writing.	4	11	19	9.94**

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Uncertain, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, Chi<sup>2</sup> = Chi-square

\*\*  $p < .01$

The results of the chi-square were significant for this question at a level  $p < .01$ . In this case the largest group of respondents agreed with the statement, while only a small minority disagreed with it. While the largest number of teachers agreed with the statement and only a small minority disagreed, there remained a large group who were uncertain about whether they liked teaching writing. As will be seen below, the uncertainty carries through the responses given to other questions. This suggests that the uncertainty may be connected to the new writing program.

Teachers' understandings of traditional writing assessment are presented in Table 3. The results for questions 6 through 9, which looked at teachers' views

on traditional writing assessment in relation to the new program, were analyzed. In general the largest group of teachers disagreed with the statements that traditional writing assessment was better than projects and portfolios. The number of teachers who were uncertain was also substantial.

Table 3

Teachers' Understandings of Traditional Writing Assessment

	SD/D	U	A/SA	Chi <sup>2</sup>
<u>Traditional Assessment</u>				
6. Traditional writing assessment is more beneficial for the students than the projects.	18	9	7	6.05*
7. Traditional writing assessment is more beneficial for the students than the portfolio.	13	15	6	3.94
8. We should use traditional writing assessment in order to get better evidence of a student's writing ability than the projects can provide.	15	11	8	2.17
9. We should use traditional writing assessment in order to get better evidence of a student's writing ability than the portfolio can provide.	17	12	5	6.41*

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Uncertain, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, Chi<sup>2</sup> = Chi-square

\*  $p < .05$

The results of the chi-square analysis were significant for questions 6 and 9 at a level of  $p < .05$ . In both cases, the largest group of respondents disagreed with the statement, while only a small minority agreed with it. Similar, though non-significant results were found for question 8. The results support the idea that teachers do not see traditional writing instruction and assessment as better than the new project and portfolio instruction and assessment system.

However, an important number of the teachers for questions 6 through 9 are uncertain as to whether traditional writing assessment is better than projects and the portfolio. For question 7, a larger group of respondents are uncertain about the portfolio being more beneficial than traditional writing assessment. This



uncertainty may be because some teachers are not sure about the new assessment procedures. These results also suggest that teachers may be having doubts about the new assessment practices being better than their previous practices. The uncertainty towards the portfolio is stronger than towards the projects, as will be seen below in questions addressed to the projects and the portfolio specifically.

Table 4 presents the results for questions 18, 29, 31, 33, 35, 37 and 39, which looked at the projects and their uses in the new writing program. A majority of the teachers agree with the idea that projects are beneficial assessment tools for the students. While very few disagreed, still a substantial number were uncertain. Teachers' understandings of the projects are given in Table 4.

Table 4

Teachers' Understandings of the Projects

QUESTIONS Projects	SD/D	U	A/SA	Chi <sup>2</sup>
18. The projects are beneficial for the students.	0	2	32	26.47**
29. The projects provide evidence of meeting the new writing program's goals and objectives.	0	10	24	5.76*
31. Through the projects we can learn how much the student has learned.	2	7	25	25.82**
33. The projects help me adjust to individual levels of achievement.	0	8	26	9.52**
35. Through the projects we can evaluate learning outcomes, which cannot be evaluated with paper and pencil tests.	1	9	24	24.05**
37. The projects encourage students to become reflective learners.	0	7	27	11.76**
39. The projects encourage students to develop skills in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their work.	1	7	26	30.05**

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Uncertain, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, Chi<sup>2</sup> = Chi-square

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

The results of the chi-square were significant for all questions at a level of  $p < .01$  except for question 29. The results of the chi-square were significant for this question at a level  $p < .05$ . In all questions, the majority of the respondents agreed with the statements. Question 18 shows the highest level of agreement among the teachers, with 32 out of 34 teachers agreeing with the statement that projects are beneficial for students. However, with the rest of the questions the level of agreement decreases. The highest level of uncertainty expressed by the teachers is for question 29. The teachers are uncertain about the projects' meeting the program's goals and objectives. This uncertainty may be a result of teachers' being unclear about the program's goals and objectives.

The results support the idea that teachers see projects as useful for instruction. The responses suggest that teachers are positive about the projects. Teachers believe that through the projects, they can learn how much the student has learnt. However, a number of teachers are uncertain about the projects. This may be a result of the teachers' uncertainty towards the projects or how the projects are implemented.

This account is supported by data from the open-ended questions. Twenty out of thirty four teachers responded to the question on what the purposes of the projects were. From the responses it can be observed that some teachers are uncertain about the purposes of the projects. For example, participant 5 states:

I think we practiced grammar especially tenses in the projects. Their purposes must be to develop writing skills.

Another important point is that the responses given among the teachers vary and there is not a consistent pattern of response. Many of the teachers

defined the purpose of the projects in a different way. The responses given by participants 1, 2, 3, 6, 10, 21, 26, and 30 clearly illustrate this point.

Participant 1:

First period: to write about such themes as holiday, biography by using given prompts and phrases.  
Second Period: to acquire similarity/ contrast/ cause/ opinion paragraphs, their language and structure it frame it within a contextual coherent unified paragraph (develop skills).

Participant 2:

- 1) Both the students and the teachers see how much the students have learned.
- 2) To transfer what they've learned
- 3) Acquiring a language through fun.

Participant 3:

To assess the student's writing skills in a guided way.

Participant 6:

to see the level of production on which they have been thought of.

Participant 10:

Students make research on a subject. They have more time to do the project than classroom writing.

Participant 21:

Students take the responsibility for their own learning.

Participant 26:

Guided writing, write for purpose.

Participant 30:

To create language awareness in the students.  
Also enables teachers to understand the weaknesses of students (about language).

The responses given by the teachers clearly exemplify the differences among the teachers on the purposes of the projects. As mentioned above, the teachers were uncertain about the project's meeting the goals and objectives of the new program. These differences among the responses of the teachers may be

indication of why they are uncertain about project's meeting the goals and objectives as seen in the results for question 29 presented in table four above.

Table 5 presents the results for questions 2, 4, 10, 12, 14, 20, 23, 25, and 27, which looked at the assessment of the projects. The responses show that teachers generally agree with the idea that projects are beneficial assessment tools. However again there is still a considerable level of uncertainty among the teachers.

Table 5

Teachers' Understandings of the Assessment of the Projects

QUESTIONS Assessment of the Projects	SD/D	U	A/SA	Chi <sup>2</sup>
2. I like using the projects to assess students.	4	6	24	21.41**
4. We should use projects as assessment tools.	2	8	24	22.82**
10. Assessing the projects requires a large amount of work time.	4	3	27	32.52**
12. The projects are beneficial assessment tools for teachers.	1	6	26	33.58**
14. I can assess my students in detail through the projects.	0	10	24	5.76*
20. The scale that we use assists me in grading the student projects more easily.	0	6	28	14.23**
23. I assign grades to each project.	5	7	22	15.23**
25. I assess the projects on a continuous basis.	4	10	20	11.52**
27. The projects are an important part of assessing student achievement.	1	4	29	41.70**

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree, D = Disagree, U = Uncertain, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, Chi<sup>2</sup> = Chi-square

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

The results of the chi-square were significant for all questions at a level  $p < .01$  except for question 14. The results of the chi-square were significant for this question at a level  $p < .05$ . The majority of the respondents were in agreement with the statements. The results support the idea that teachers see projects as beneficial tools for the assessment of the students. The responses suggest that teachers are positive about the projects. However, a majority of the respondents believe that assessing projects requires a great amount of work time.

For questions 2, 4, 12, 14, 20, 23 and 25 the uncertain responses of some teachers cannot be avoided. Some teachers are uncertain if projects should be used as assessment tools and they are uncertain about assessing the projects on a continuous basis.

This can be observed also with the open-ended question 3, which poses the question, 'I evaluate the projects through....'. Only 16 out of 34 teachers answered the question. A majority of the teachers who responded said that they assessed the projects through the scale provided by the writing unit. The results to question 20 in table 5 above show that the majority of teachers feel that the scale makes the grading of the projects easier. However, there was again an inconsistency among the teachers about the scale being used. This can be observed in the responses of participants 4, 12, and 30.

Participant 4:

A profile which gives marks to the project in 4 basic categories as follows;

- 1) Organisation    2) Vocabulary            3) Language
- 4) Mechanics

Participant 12:

The grading scale which was given by our department. It consists 5 parts; topic sentence, supporting details, vocabulary, language and content.

Participant 30:

The scale which has two main sections which are organisation and content and also class curve.

The difference among the responses of the teachers on the assessment of the projects may be a result of the lack of the consistent understanding the teachers have on the assessment of the projects. This may be pointing to the need for additional training.

Table 6 presents questions 16, 17, 19, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, and 40, which looked at the portfolio and its uses in the new writing program. A strong majority of the teachers see the portfolio as beneficial. However, as seen in the above tables with the projects, there is uncertainty among the teachers about how the portfolio may be beneficial. The uncertainty is even greater than that seen in the data for the projects. The teachers' understandings of the portfolios are presented in Table 6.

Table 6

Teachers' Understandings of the Portfolio

QUESTIONS Portfolio	SD/D	U	A/SA	Chi <sup>2</sup>
16. The portfolio displays student development over time.	0	7	27	11.76**
17. Portfolios are primarily student folders with their work neatly kept in them.	0	4	30	19.88**
19. The portfolio is beneficial for the students.	0	4	30	19.88**
30. The portfolio provides evidence of meeting the new writing program's goals and objectives.	0	15	19	0.47
32. Through the portfolios we can learn how much the student has learned.	0	8	26	9.52**
34. The portfolios help me adjust to individual levels of achievement.	0	12	22	2.94
36. Through the portfolio we can evaluate learning outcomes, which cannot be evaluated with paper and pencil tests.	1	14	19	15.23**
38. The portfolio encourages students to become reflective learners.	0	14	20	1.05
40. The portfolio encourages students to develop skills in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their work.	1	14	19	15.23**

Note. SD =Strongly Disagree, D =Disagree, U = Uncertain, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree, Chi<sup>2</sup> = Chi-square

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

The results of the chi-square were significant for questions 16, 17, 19, 32, 36, and 40 at a level  $p < .01$ . The majority of the respondents agreed with the statements. Non-significant results were found for questions 30, 34, and 38.

The overall results support the idea that teachers see the portfolio as useful for instruction and assessment. For question 19, which states that the portfolio is beneficial for students, 30 out of 34 teachers agreed with the statement and only 4 teachers were uncertain. For question 16, which looks at whether teachers feel the portfolio displays student development over time, 27 agreed and 7 were uncertain. However, for the remaining questions, uncertainty generally increased. It was

lowest for question 32, which was also about student development, but rose considerably for more detailed questions about the use of the portfolio (questions 34, 36, 38, 40). In particular, some teachers were uncertain whether portfolios let them evaluate student development more effectively than traditional tests, matching earlier results shown in Table 3. This clearly shows that although teachers agree with the idea that portfolios are beneficial for the students, they still have doubts about how to use them. It can be assumed that perhaps what the teachers try to do, what they actually do, and their beliefs are in contrast with each other. This may be a result of the differences in the understandings among the teachers. Observed earlier with the projects, this uncertainty has carried over to the portfolio to an even larger degree. This uncertainty among the teachers is important, as projects and the portfolio are an important part of the new writing program.

A majority of the teachers believe the portfolio provides evidence for meeting the new program's goals and objectives (question 30). However, the teachers' highest level of uncertainty is also given in response to the question. This may be a result of the lack of clarity among the teachers on the goals and objectives of the program.

Finally, almost all teachers agreed with the statement that portfolios are primarily student folders with their work neatly kept in them. This would suggest that teachers do not use the portfolio for instruction in ways pointed to in the literature (see chapter 2).

The responses given to the open-ended question 2, on what the purposes of the portfolio are, show similarities with the responses given to the Likert-type



questions. 20 out of 34 teachers responded to the question. The difference among the teachers' understandings, again, is clearly evident in the responses they have given. The differences among the teachers' responses can be seen through the responses given by participants 10, 14, 26, and 31:

Participant 10:

Teachers can see the results of his/her teaching better with portfolios. Moreover, the curriculum development units of the school can make use of portfolios.

Participant 14:

To force students to keep their writings in a neat way.

Participant 26:

Keep a record of sts' development in English.

Participant 31:

To assess students development on their writing skill.

As can be clearly observed there is wide variation in teachers' definitions of what the purpose of the portfolio is. The responses vary from the portfolio being useful for the students for keeping their writing neatly to assessment and to the portfolio being useful for curriculum development. This may be result of insufficient teacher training in use of the portfolio.

Another important point, which became clearly evident through the open-ended question is that some teachers see the portfolio as a student folder for keeping their work in. This point was also evident in question 17 presented in table 6. For that question, 30 out of 34 teachers stated that they saw the portfolio as a student folder. Participants 1 and 23 for the third open-ended question stated that portfolios were student folders.

Participant 1:

Primarily folders with students' work neatly kept in them.

Participant 23:

We only put students productions in files and I don't think the writing program aims anything further than that.

Although teachers believe that the portfolio is simply a student folder, a majority of them also believe that it is beneficial for the students. This clearly illustrates the teachers' contradictions on the use of the portfolio.

Table 7 presents the results for questions 3, 5, 11, 13, 15, 21, 22, 24, 26 and 28, which looked at the assessment of the portfolio. It can be observed that the majority of the teachers like the portfolio as an assessment tool. However, the uncertainty among the teachers on the assessment of the portfolio cannot be avoided. The responses of the teachers are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Teachers' Understandings of the Assessment of the Portfolio

QUESTIONS	SD/D	U	A/SA	Chi <sup>2</sup>
<u>Assessment of the Portfolio</u>				
3. I like using the portfolio to assess students.	6	8	20	10.11**
5. We should use the portfolio as an assessment tool.	4	11	19	9.94**
11. Assessing the portfolio requires a large amount of work time.	3	9	22	16.64**
13. The portfolio is a beneficial assessment tool for teachers.	1	13	20	16.29**
15. I can assess my students in detail through the portfolio.	1	13	20	21.58**
21. The scale that we use assists me in grading the student portfolio more easily.	1	11	22	19.47**
22. I look at writing development as a part of evaluating student portfolios.	6	7	21	12.41**
24. I assign grades to each portfolio entry.	7	13	14	2.52
26. I assess the portfolios on a continuous basis.	6	12	16	4.47
28. The portfolio is an important part of assessing student achievement.	0	11	23	4.23*

Note. SD = Strongly Disagree, U = Uncertain, A = Agree, SA = Strongly Agree,

Chi<sup>2</sup> = Chi-square

\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$

The results of the chi-square were significant for all questions at a level  $p < .01$  except for question 24, 26 and 28. The result of the chi-square was significant for question 28 at a level  $p < .05$ . For all questions except 24 and 26 the majority of the respondents agreed with the statements. The results support the idea that teachers see the portfolio as a beneficial assessment tool for the students. Again, the uncertain answers of some teachers cannot be avoided. A number of teachers are uncertain about the assessment of the portfolio.

However, the teachers believe assessing the portfolio requires a great amount of work time on their part with 22 of 34 agreeing. This may be an

important reason for the higher level of disagreement seen in responses to the questions compared to similar ones for the projects. The teachers may be hesitant in checking the portfolio, believing it is time consuming.

Up to table 7, generally, teachers were uncertain with some points of projects and portfolios. However, with table 7, there has been a rise in the strongly disagree/disagree statements. For example for question 3, which asks if teachers like using portfolios for assessing students, six teachers disagreed. The rise in the number of disagreements may be based on their lack of understanding of the purpose of the portfolio. The reason for their lack of understanding may be a result of the training received at the beginning of the term.

Similar responses have been given to the fourth open-ended question, 'I evaluate the portfolio through...' Fourteen out of 34 teachers responded to the question. Some teachers' uncertainty towards the portfolio can be clearly observed through the answers given to the open-ended questions. For example participant 4 is uncertain about how to evaluate the portfolio and states that:

I am not very certain how to apply the realistic evaluation of portfolios. I think the self-evaluation of the work is the utmost importance.

The responses of the teachers on how to evaluate the portfolio also vary and there is no clear answer to how the portfolio is evaluated. The answers given by participants 10, 25, 28, 29, 30, 31 and 34 clearly illustrate this point. As an example, participants 10, 29 and 34 claim they assess the portfolio through a scale.

Participant 10:

Profiles. Furthermore I compare my classes' portfolios with other classrooms.

Participant 29:

Grading profile in order to be fair to each student.

Participant 34:

A scale.

For participants 25 and 30 the students' achievement and development is what is evaluated in the portfolio.

Participant 25:

The student's development in revising the drafts of his original writing, and through his ability to make use of a wide range of vocabulary, use of grammatical patterns, etc.

Participant 30:

Comparing students' achievement.

For the rest of the participants the responses given differ and a consensus cannot be reached.

Participant 28:

Student's background.

Participant 31:

My own/ a standardized type of criteria.

For participant 1, the evaluation of the portfolio was a failure. The participant claims that the teachers started keeping the portfolios, yet they were not successful in carrying it out.

Unfortunately, we made a start with keeping students' portfolios of assessed homework, projects, writing exams but with no success.

These responses are evidence of the lack of harmony among the teachers about how to assess the portfolio. Each teacher mentions a different way of assessing the portfolio. In addition to the above statements, participants 12 and 13 remarked that they did not assess the portfolio. This provides evidence that there

is no clear agreement among the teachers on whether the portfolio is assessed at all.

Participant 12:  
I don't do this!

Participant 13:  
We don't do this!

Twenty four out of 34 teachers answered the fifth open-ended question, which asks what is included in the portfolio used by the institution. From the list given, the teachers were asked to choose the alternatives which were applicable. There was again variation among the teachers' responses. The answers given are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8

The Answers Given to the Open-Ended Question 5

Student questions	2
Notes	7
Outlines	11
Initial drafts	16
Revised drafts	22
The final product	23
Self evaluation of the work	6
Others	2

The alternatives chosen by the teachers vary. A majority of the teachers who responded have chosen initial drafts, revised drafts, and the final product to be included in the portfolio. Eleven teachers claimed that they also included

outlines in their portfolios. This shows a lack of harmony among the teachers on what to include in the portfolio. Also, in connection with question 17 presented in Table 6, including only initial drafts, revised drafts and the final product in the portfolio may make the portfolio a folder with students' work neatly kept in them. For the portfolio to be more than a simple folder, the items included in it should be more than only initial drafts, revised drafts, and the final product.

The data gathered through the questionnaires show that there is some uncertainty and variation among the teachers despite generally positive attitudes towards the projects and portfolio. The teachers seem to be more certain in their views on projects than they are on the portfolio. The teachers are not certain if the projects and the portfolio also meet the goals and objectives of the program although these new practices are an important part of the new instruction and assessment. The teachers also vary in how they say they are using and evaluating the projects and portfolio.

### Interview Results

In this section, in order to understand the teachers' understandings of the projects and portfolio, interview sessions were conducted with five randomly selected writing program teachers, and the director of the writing program. The interview questions were based on the items of the questionnaire. The director of the program and the writing teachers were given two different interviews. The questions for the director and the teachers were prepared differently so as to be able to gather more information from the director on the new program as it had been organized and implemented by him. The interview of the program director consisted of nine questions (see Appendix B). The interviews given to the five

writing teachers consisted of 17 questions (see Appendix C). The interview sessions were organized to collect data for different purposes, which are outlined below under relevant titles. This section presents the results of the data collected and analyzed to provide answers to the research questions given in the methodology chapter. The analyses of the program director's and the teachers' interviews were analyzed qualitatively through categorization based on the research questions were posed and investigated in this study.

### Analysis of the Interviews

The data gathered from the interviews with the teachers were analyzed qualitatively through categorization. The categories were mainly based on the research questions and grouped as teachers' understandings of the project in general and in the institution, teachers' understandings of the portfolio in general and in the institution, teachers' opinions about the new writing program and their suggestions for improvement. The analysis of the data revealed that there were differences among teachers in their understanding of projects and the portfolio, and there was also a lack of consistency in assessment practices among the staff.

#### Teachers' understandings of the projects in general

The director and the teachers of the program were asked their understandings of the projects in general. The director explained his understanding by saying that projects involved using particular types of writing, doing research on a topic and afterwards writing about the research. In the director's own words,

There are very different kinds of projects. What I understand, it actually depends on the students' level, but if I were asked to prepare a project, I would, after giving the necessary information about a kind of essay, I would just give my students a topic and that topic should need to be research through books, so students should go



to the library, they should collect information, and then they should write an essay. I am just talking about an essay this can be a report, this can be a summary, but let us say basically essay, and students should write an essay on that topic.

It is clear that the director has an understanding of what projects are and how they are used as instruction and assessment tools. According to the director, projects have three main elements, which are giving the necessary information to students about the essay type, giving students a topic and asking them to do research on that topic. He gives examples of different projects and he gives different examples of writings students can do while preparing a project. Collecting information and writing on it is the main purpose of projects for the director.

The fourth interviewee gave a similar definition to the director's, emphasizing a requirement for research before writing an essay. The interviewee stated, "In my view a project is kind of an activity where students are given a topic and then they go on and do a research on it and come up with a piece of writing". The only difference of this from the director's definition is that the participant does not specify any type of writing.

The first, third and the fifth interviewees have similar ideas as to what projects are. They mention that it is a style of writing which the teachers should give information to students on how to write, yet they do not mention the research which has to be carried while preparing projects. The interviewees explained their understanding of the term 'project' in general as follows:

Interviewee 1:

What I understand from the project is there is a kind of aid just to lead us teachers to help our students or how we can help our students. The information we should

convey clearly the message clearly and the methods the projects we are talking about should cover the methods of how we can teach that or we can give the information clearly.

Interviewee 3:

A project should have an aim first of all. And it should have a target. But there is a distinction when I say aim. The target is when you get to teach writing reading what so ever and the aim is while you are doing that. Writing project what is your aim in doing that. You have aims of grammar or aims of writing structure etc. That should be taken into account considering what teaching about it. Preparing and doing a project.

Interviewee 5:

A project is a style of writing, and first you brainstorm with those kids what to write about and then make an outline. And then we guide them in order to write in such a way such as a close paragraph.

The above teachers' responses are similar to the director's definition in the sense that the director himself also mentions that the students should be given the necessary information first. This can be considered as guiding the students so as to be able to help them become better writers. The only big difference is that the director clearly asserts the notion that projects should be written after some research. However, none of the above teachers point out research. The first and the third interviewee's remarks are very similar in the sense that whatever form of practice is used, the target should be clearly specified and the teaching should be carried out according to that target, which then becomes the aim of the teaching. Clearly specified targets and aims are aids for the student while teaching is carried out. The fifth interviewee specifies how students should be guided or aided while writing.

The interview transcripts showed that the second interviewee was uncertain about projects and claimed that she did not have much information about them.

However, she pointed out one important feature of the projects, which was doing research. Interviewee 2 states that:

To be honest I do not have much information about project writing, but I guess it is something in which students do some kind of research and it is something like ongoing process I guess. And it may involve group work or pair work also when we say project I guess. That is what I know.

The teachers all had some kind of an understanding of the project. Each participant described a different aspect of the project, in comparison to the director. The projects, as can be seen, were a new practice for the teachers which might explain the differences. However it is clear that the participants have an understanding of their own about what a project is and how they are used as instruction and assessment tools.

#### Teachers' understanding of the projects in the institution

The director and the teachers, after being asked their general understandings of the projects, were asked for their understandings of how the projects were particularly conceived in their institution. The director's institutional understanding of the projects is different from his general understanding. For the general understanding of a project, the director emphasizes the research aspect; however, for the institutional understanding, language and basic structures gain importance. The director of the program described his understanding of the project being used in the institution as:

Writing has some components; one of them is language, vocabulary, and then organization and then mechanics. For organization we have a different book but for language we decided to prepare our students through these projects and we concentrated on very basic structures. Tenses, modals, passives and then

conjunctions, what not. They know the organization they know mostly vocabulary how to use the vocabulary where to use them correctly, where to use the correct words but they still had the problem of you know actually let us say correct grammar that is why we decided to do projects.

The director of the program explained that as most of the students had difficulty in grammar, and as most of them were familiar with organization and vocabulary usage, the projects were based on grammar.

Four out of five participants' definitions of the institutional projects match the director's definition. There are differences among the participants, but overall they emphasize grammar teaching through projects. The second and the third interviewees give similar descriptions of a project. Both interviews emphasized the importance of the use of projects for grammar teaching in the institution.

Interviewee 2:

We use projects mainly to not teach review grammar points that we covered before hand and we had a focus for four of them and the first one is simple present tense and students wrote something afterwards but they were used to reinforce the grammar.

Interviewee 3:

They were quite leading and they were quite good for students for their level especially the projects that we use in the first term. They were generally based on an aim and they had targeted grammar target and organizational things, which I find very helpful for the students to understand the project, their aim and how they should be prepared.

Both interviewees' descriptions of the project are not very different from one another, as they both emphasize grammar teaching. However, the third interviewee adds the organizational aspect of writing, which is also embedded in her understanding of the project in the institution.

Such an understanding correlated with the goals of the program as mentioned by the director. According to the director, the biggest concern was that most of the students were familiar with organization and vocabulary usage, yet most of them had difficulty in grammar. That was why the projects were based on grammar instruction.

The fourth interviewee, as mentioned earlier, was certain on the definition of what a project was, and claimed that the use of the project in the institution was not being executed according to that definition.

In my institution projects are not perceived as the way I have described before. We have a writing book and we introduce the students this with the necessary grammar structures, linkers and connectors and we have checklist like close paragraph etc. Then we ask the students to write a close paragraph. That is all.

Her remarks revealed dissatisfaction with the implementation of the project in the institution. According to the interviewee, writing in the institution was limited to helping students with their grammar only, and it lacked some other features of composing a successful essay. Despite the dissatisfaction expressed, the definition that is given by the participant is similar to the director's.

The fifth interviewee stated that her general understanding of a project and the institutional one were the same, saying, "That is the project that we do in this institution here". The participant's general understanding was that projects were a style of writing in which students brainstormed, prepared outlines and afterwards wrote essays.

There were clearly two points that were observed through the program director's and the teachers' statements. Almost all teachers are in basic agreement with what the director describes the projects to be in the institution. The second

point was that both the director's and the teachers' general understandings and their institutional understandings of projects differ from each other.

These points clearly show that practices are sometimes altered consistent to the needs of the program while being used as a tool for instruction and assessment. According to Holliday (1998), the understandings of different methodological practices can be adapted to the teaching situation. Practices should be suitable to the institution's and the teachers' needs, as they are the ones carrying out the teaching process. Clear understanding of the practices being used in the institution plays a vital role in the success of a program. Clear understanding should lead to consistency in practice. In this case however, the data seem to show clear differences of practice among the teachers.

#### Teachers' understandings of the portfolio in general

To gather data on the research question about the teachers' understandings of a portfolio, the researcher asked both the director and the teachers what their general understanding of a portfolio was. For the director the portfolio is similar to a journal and a diary, and the products included are for doing self-evaluation or reflecting back on what has been learned. The director of the program defined his general understanding of a portfolio as:

In general I haven't seen people using portfolio in Turkey very much actually. This is just like keeping a journal you know, or let us say if you make it more personal, it is like keeping a diary. Student throughout the year should put, I am talking about just writing, should put what they produce in the portfolio, and the most important thing they themselves should see their improvement.

The fifth interviewee gave a similar explanation to that of the directors and defined the portfolio as, "It is really beneficial for students; keep track of what

they have written. And how they are written and the mistakes they have done. Whether they increase their writing style”. Both the director and the fifth interviewee emphasize the product and student use.

The first and the fourth interviewees' remarks showed that their understanding about the portfolio was similar. The first interviewee stated that “From the beginning of the year to the end whatever we have done and whatever we want the students to do”. Although for the first interviewee there seemed to be no explicit descriptions of the portfolio, the implications she gave revealed that she saw the portfolio as a collection of students' products from the beginning to the end, which illustrated the portfolio's continuous assessment aspect.

The fourth interviewee, like her description of the project, again, gave a clear description of what a portfolio was. She pointed out the fact that portfolios were continuous assessment tools.

By portfolio, I understand that there is a continuous assessment of the project and every students have a file in which all the writings pieces are kept and at the end while or while they are writing, and during the term the teacher consistently check their files to see if they made any progresses.

Both the first and the fourth interviewees emphasize the product and the portfolios being teacher tools. Both interviewees made a clearer distinction than other participants and added the ongoing assessment process of the portfolio. This showed that they were aware of an important characteristic of portfolios.

The second interviewee was uncertain on what a portfolio was. The uncertainty was clearly stated, however, she also pointed out an important point of the portfolio, which was ongoing assessment and stated that:

I do not have much information because we have never done it before, but it should be an ongoing process. I guess and assessment is also ongoing.

The third interviewee, unlike the other participants, was totally uncertain about the portfolio and was not able to give a clear definition. She stated that:

Well that is the question. I think they should be in connection to the, to each other I mean that was good in here, I mean the first term we have something in the second term we have something different, but they were very much in connection I believe.

Again most teachers had general knowledge on the portfolio, however, they were not informed about its full uses. The respondents' remarks were similar to the ones they gave on the projects, although they have more uncertainties about the portfolio. They had not seen the portfolio being used in practice, so they seemed more uncertain about its uses. They seemed to be seeing the portfolio as a beneficial tool for assessment as portfolios monitored learning continually. But they also had a tendency to see the portfolio as a student folder. This can be interpreted as lack of clarity on the purpose to be served by the portfolio (Mabry, 1999).

#### Teachers' understanding of the portfolio in the institution

The director of the program stated that the purpose of the portfolio in the institution was for gathering information on the program and for seeing how things were working. Through the portfolio, the director would be able to gather more in-depth data on the program. The director defined the portfolio in the institution as:

It was the first year so I myself wanted to see what was going on. That is why all of our teachers kept portfolios and sometimes we looked at those portfolios and the students' written work, so we tried to see where we were going. Did it work or did it need any modifications, you know any changes or the most important question was if



we had to continue or stop. So after we saw in the portfolios, we decided our students were ready for the new book basically organization.

The director was very clear that the portfolio was intended to be used for program evaluation.

The fourth interviewee's description was different from the director's. The participant stressed that the portfolio was teacher oriented and claimed that the evaluation of the student's improvement is done by the teacher, not by the student him or herself. The participant asserted that:

By portfolio, I understand that there is a continuous assessment of the project and every students have a file in which all the writings pieces are kept and at the end while or while they are writing and during the term the teacher consistently check their files to see if they made any progresses.

The fifth interviewee, similiar to the fourth, remarked that how the portfolio was used depended on the teacher. This was, again, different from what the director of the program stated. According to the fifth interviewee:

I think that the teachers do individually. There is no feedback to the content. After each teacher to keep track of students portfolio. Normally I grade them after the rough draft, I grade them and no I correct them, and then they submit their final drafts I grade them. And then both the teacher and the students keep track of their increase.

The fifth interviewee believes that the use of the portfolio depends on the teacher. Each teacher individually keeps track of the portfolio, and the students are able to see their development over time. This point is similar to the other participants as they also defined the portfolios as on-going assessment.

The first interviewee's general and institutional understandings of the portfolio are the same.

From the beginning of the year to the end whatever we have done and whatever we want the students to do and our purpose the information we should give should be involved.

The third interviewee states that the portfolio is checked to see student development over time, and believes it shows students' progress over time. The third interviewee has a more comprehensive and clear understanding of the portfolio and claims that:

I do keep their writings especially to compare and to show them. I had this folder for every student. I generally kept one example of one type structure of writing. I just could not keep all the homework, everything that they wrote, but as they came and go, as we checked, I gave them feedback. I was showing them, they saw what they did and I was not only seeing them but also reminded them what they did in the first term "do you remember this" we did it but they did it. I know that so generally I made references "do you remember this ok we did this" that is parallel that is what we did and also helped with the grammar too. "Do you remember the writing project, we did this." it also helped too.

This definition is both teacher and student oriented.

The second interviewee gave a totally different explanation of the portfolio from the other participants and the director by saying that:

I do not think we use portfolios I mean we put students' writings in a file but that was all. We did not use the whole file to assess students' writing progress or anything like that. We put the separate things in the same file. And we gave grades during the quizzes or exams but students' classroom productions were not assessed.

For the second interviewee, the portfolio served no other purpose than as a student file. This was also observed through the quantitative data. Teachers generally saw the portfolio as a student folder. For question 17 in table 6 which

stated that portfolios were student folders, 30 out of 34 teachers stated that they agreed.

The statement above revealed the interviewee's misperception of the role of the portfolio, which was also mentioned and complained about by the director of the program. According to the director, the main problem with the new program seemed to be the teachers' understandings of the portfolio. For him, most teachers had difficulty in realizing the difference between a folder and a portfolio.

He said:

Most of our colleagues could not see the difference between students' folders and portfolios. During our training sessions we decided that sometimes we were going to refer to those portfolios and written work and we were going to make some changes according to the data we had. Most of our colleagues thought that they were simple folders in order to keep students' work. This was I guess one of the disadvantages let us say because of the hard work this was something unfortunately avoided.

Portfolios, if seen as student folders, will have little value either to students or teachers. In order to be useful, careful consideration needs to be given to what goes into a portfolio, the process of selection, and how the information is to be used (Krest, 1990; Valencia, 1990). Although there were misperceptions, the teachers were aware of the fact that the portfolio should be used as an ongoing assessment tool. The second interviewee complained about the fact that they did not assess the portfolio in the institution. This was an interesting point, as according to the director's explanations they assessed the portfolio not as a grade but to see completion of tasks.

Portfolios can be very good tool of assessment I guess. We are assessing portfolio. In their overall grade not we have you know different criteria here one of them is

classroom something assessment and we include the portfolio results in that part I cannot remember the exam name now. Percentage it all depends you know let us say throughout the year reading is 25% so we arrange the evaluation according to how much that skill is that with. So almost throughout the year, writing is 20-25%. Each project entry has a percentage and we don't assess the portfolio we just look at whether it is handed in on time and whether it is complete or not.

The first interviewee explained that she assesses the portfolio in some ways and she stated, "It is my part of my assessment".

However, the second and the fourth interviewee had a totally different opinion. The second Interviewee stated, "It is not part of the assessment. But students look at them to see their development". The fourth interviewee also stated, "we do keep records but we do not assess them efficiently. I have a file for each student but I do not go over it."

The third and the fifth interviewee asserted that they grade each entry, however they did not assess the overall grade of the portfolio.

Third Interviewee:

We have a profile here that we use for every entry for example we generally do the writings for 20 points. We divide them into groups we give certain points to topic sentence structure to coherence to grammar but they are not very high I mean we do not give much points for the grammar. We do not discourage the students while they are writing because they always have that problem of grammar and we give have different entries and I myself do not believe in assessing overall. I do not like that.

Fifth Interviewee:

I grade them. After the rough draft I grade them and no I correct them, and when they submit their final drafts I grade them. And then both the teacher and the students keep track of their increase. After each project, we try to give a project as we mark or everyone.

These remarks revealed a lack of harmony among the teachers in the implementation of the new program, which may be a result of teachers' misperceptions of the portfolio. Such a lack of unity in the implementation causes a kind of chaos. According to Black (2001), in order to have an effective program, teachers should know what they are doing and achieving in terms of teaching.

Teacher's opinions about the new program and suggestions for improvement

The director of the program was clearly aware of the need for improvement. The director, like the teachers, considered the new program as a good start and believed it to be more relevant to the needs of the students, which was also evident in the quantitative data.

Four out of five participants in the study stated that they were pleased with the new program although they believed that it needed improvement. The first interviewee, like the director, described the new program as a good start, which needed to be improved in terms of timing and the type of exercises. A similar remark came from the third interviewee. She defined the program as beneficial, but she believed there were areas, which should be improved. In particular, the locally prepared book needed to be modified, as it lacked exercises to meet student needs:

First interviewee:

Even if I said before it needs criticisms and it should be improved, but it is a good way. There are some exercises practices, which should be it, should have been written in the book. They are missing and the practice the time we give the students to practice in the classroom paragraphs I think is limited.

Third interviewee:

Yes it's nice, it is a good beginning, but it is not enough. I mean I had to a lot of extra things in the classroom

other than the book, I had to give them more examples. I had to do more different studies about the paragraph writing more activities because generally the students get bored and they do not just like read and write, they want to do the activities in the classroom. So and I believe it should be visual, I mean I believe that authentic material and visual material help students develop more ideas. So I think it lacks that but other than that the book is fine.

The fifth interviewee was happy about the locally prepared book. The interviewee claimed that the book made her feel more comfortable as it was relevant to the context of her teaching.

I am comfortable with the book we are using. I think it is getting better and better every year. I am more comfortable than I was last year. It is more relevant to my teaching.

She also believed, like the first and the third interviewee that the program was a good beginning and that the program was improving every year.

The second interviewee assessed the issue from a different perspective, emphasizing the fact that, although what they were doing could not be called as ‘project writing’, the program was good as it was based on the goals and objectives of the course.

I do not know I cannot say what we’re doing is not good but it is not portfolio project writing so we should be aware of that part if what we want to do is this it is OK. No problem the program is good. But if we think we are doing portfolio project writing this is not. We should do it accordingly. Putting the students’ paper in a file is not portfolio writing. If we know that, that is fine I f we say this is suitable for us, we are going to do it no problem. But if not, we should know that this is not that.

The only total completely negative comment was made by the fourth interviewee, who found the program unsuccessful as she believed that students

were able to write with organizational structures and transition, but they could not make grammatically correct sentences, which showed that although this program aimed to give more grammar practice to the students, it failed in reaching this aim for this interviewee. She felt that not only inadequate grammar input and practice, but also a heavy workload affected the effectiveness of the program.

### Conclusion

Both the quantitative and the qualitative results showed that although the teachers were in favor of the new program and saw it as a good start, most of them had various understandings about the specifics of the new program, especially the portfolio. Generally, the teachers were positive about the new program. The data revealed the fact that the training seminar or workshops given at the beginning of the program failed in reaching its aim, which was given to inform the teachers about the project and the portfolio, and to provide them with sufficient practice so that they could implement them in the way that was desired by the program.

## CHAPTER 5

### Overview of the Study

This study investigates teachers' understandings of using the projects and the portfolio for instruction and assessment during the implementation of the new writing program at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. The reason for investigation was to provide an insight into teachers' understandings of using the projects and the portfolio in order to help the administration of Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division to improve the program and help the teachers' teach writing more effectively.

This chapter will introduce the findings for the research questions, discussion, implications for future research, limitations of the study and the conclusion.

In this study, first examples from the literature about educational change and the role of teachers, assessment, writing assessment, traditional and alternative assessment and projects and portfolios were introduced. Then the methodology of the study was explained and the analysis of the data were presented.

As the understandings of the teachers of Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division were investigated, the teachers of this department were the only participants. The director and the 34 teachers of the writing program participated in the study on voluntary basis.

First the teachers were given a questionnaire to learn about their understandings of using the projects and the portfolio. Then the director of the



program and five participants were interviewed to gather more detailed information about their understandings of the new program and how it was implemented.

The data was analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. For the quantitative data, chi-squares were calculated by using Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS). Next, in order to analyze the questionnaires, the items that were asked were regrouped according to their topics. Separate tables for each topic were prepared for the questions. The qualitative data, the interviews, were all transcribed, and categorised according to their subject matter. The categories were based on the research questions and grouped as teachers' understanding of projects in general and in the institution, teachers' understanding of the portfolio in general and in the institution, and teachers' suggestions and ideas to improve the current writing program. Comparisons were made with the program directors and the teacher's understandings of the projects and the portfolio as instruction and assessment tools.

#### Research Question 1

- 1) What are the teachers' understandings of the new assessment procedures of the writing program being implemented?
- a) What are the teachers' understandings of the projects?

The analysis of the quantitative data revealed that most teachers are positive about the projects and see them as beneficial for the students, which was supported by the qualitative data as well. The teachers generally believe that rather than using traditional approaches to writing, using projects would be more beneficial for the students.

However, the analysis of both the qualitative and the quantitative data also showed that teachers have unclear understanding of the projects, and they are uncertain about their use, which may be interpreted as a result of inadequate training at the beginning of the program. The uncertainty of the teachers could be clearly observed, as during the piloting of the questionnaire, a plurality of the teachers asked for an explanation of what the projects and the portfolio meant. Because teachers' understanding of the projects are diverse, there seems to be no harmony in the implementation of the program. Such a finding implies the need for professional ongoing training throughout the program, which will combine theory and practice and help teachers to remove the questions in their minds related to the program.

b) What are the teachers' understandings of the portfolio?

Teachers are generally positive about the portfolio and believe that the portfolio is beneficial for students. According to the questionnaire results, most teachers see the portfolio as a beneficial tool for assessment, like the project. However, the data gathered from the questionnaire point out the fact that most teachers are more unclear about the use of the portfolio than they are about the projects. Through the quantitative data the teachers' uncertainty on the portfolio was clearly observable. A large majority of the teachers could not see a difference between a portfolio and a student folder.

Some teachers believed the portfolio to be merely a collection of student work and so did not use it as an ongoing tool to check student progress as was intended by the director of the writing program. These results emphasise that although they are positive on the use of the portfolio, they cannot use it effectively

for assessment purposes, as they may not have been fully trained and well informed about the concept of the portfolio and its uses. The Bushman and Schnitker (n.d.) study also illustrate the importance of training.

Through the qualitative data it was observed that teachers' understandings of the portfolio were in some ways different from the literature. According to the literature, portfolios are purposeful collections of students work used for ongoing assessment and instruction. Teachers' understandings of the portfolio also differed from the directors, which was clear in the data. Another difference, which could be observed, was the variance among the teachers of their understandings of the portfolio. In the interviews some teachers asserted that some saw the portfolio as a student folder, some saw it as a continuous assessment tool for the student and some believed the portfolio was for the teacher.

Research Question 2:

What are the teachers' feelings and suggestions about the new writing program?

The results showed that the teachers are pleased with the new program. They see it as a good start as it fits their needs. Despite the fact that they like the new program, they still believe that it needs improvement in terms of timing and the type of exercises they do to help their students to improve their writing skills. Due to time constraints and heavy workload, they cannot perform as well as possible, as they skip checking the portfolio for student development and their students cannot get the maximum profit from some components of the program such as giving feedback and seeing self development through the portfolio.

Teachers feel happy about the locally produced writing book which is used in the writing program as it responds to their and their students' needs. Although they

are happy they also suggest that the book should be revised, as the number of exercises is not enough to give adequate practice to students with their writing.

### Discussion

The findings of this study indicate that although teachers are positive about the new writing program, their uncertainty and misunderstanding about the concepts and aims of the projects and the portfolio prevent them from implementing it as effectively as possible. The results show that some teachers are uncertain about the new program or the new change. This might be resulted from the fact that teachers were not ready for such a sudden change in terms of professional knowledge and practice. As Fullan (1991) claims, change needs to be a gradual process, individuals should get adjusted to and be able to adapt to the program steadily.

Although it seems that a reasonable change has taken place at administrative level, based on the director's remarks, the results of the study reveal that the desired change may not have occurred in the classroom. According to Hall and Hord (as cited in Fullan 1991), the classroom is the environment where the implementation of the changes takes place, and if teachers are not given enough time to adjust and become a part of this process, the change will only be taking place at the administrative level.

The results of both the questionnaires and the interviews imply that teachers may have had problems with the application of the newly introduced practices. Teachers claimed that they assessed the projects; however, this was not the same for the portfolio, as some of them stated that they did not assess the portfolio. Munby (1999) claims assessment is very important not only for

monitoring student achievement but also for evaluating the quality of the program. Therefore, after planning and implementation of the change process, teachers have to keep track of student development to make sure that the change action is a correct one. Some teachers asserted that they did not give feedback to the portfolio. One reason for that might be the fact that portfolios require great amount of work time for assessing and giving feedback to student work (Linn & Gronlund, 2000).

The results imply that the teachers may have been uncertain about the purpose of the portfolio. Purpose is very important when designing the portfolio. Arter and Spandel (1991) argue that there are two main purposes of a portfolio, which are student assessment and instruction. They claim that good assessment is an important part of the teaching process and believe that the emphasis is likely to be different when the primary purpose is assessment than when the only purpose is instruction. Without a clear understanding of the purpose, portfolios are not different from unorganised collections of the materials students have prepared. Perhaps that's why, as stated by the director of the program, most teachers had difficulty in realising the difference between a portfolio and a folder. This is not surprising, as without a purpose, a portfolio is just a folder of student work (Arter & Paulsen, 1991)

Another issue which came out of the data is the difference in understanding among the teachers and the uncertainty of some about the new program. To resolve this problem, the teachers should be given more training. The first thing to be done should be to increase training the teachers receive on the practices used for instruction and assessment.

The new practices do not have to be implemented according to their definitions presented in the literature. They may be changed in accordance to the program's and institution's needs and goals and objectives. The uses of the projects and the portfolio at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division differs from the ones presented in the literature. All practices being used do not have to be identical with their theoretical definitions, as practices may go through changes or alterations in the teaching context where it is being used (Coleman, 1996; Holliday, 1994; Markee, 1997). However, these differences have to be clarified and a consensus must be reached on how these practices are to be applied (Holliday, 1994). Through in depth training, the teachers may come to an agreement. If there is a lack of consensus among the teachers and the administration, the program fails in reaching its goals and objectives.

#### Pedagogical Implications

Both the quantitative and the qualitative data showed that although the teachers were in favor of the new program and saw it as a good start, most of them had various understandings about the specifics of the new program, especially the portfolio. The data revealed the fact that the training seminar or workshops given at the beginning of the program failed in reaching its aim, which was given to inform the teachers about the project and the portfolio, and to provide them with sufficient practice so that they could implement them in the way that was desired by the program. This points to the fact that teachers need improved training. The training should focus on giving clear descriptions of the new practices projects and portfolios and their uses in the program. Another classroom solution would be

the clearer statement of the programs goals and objectives. The uncertainty among the teachers' may be the result of the lack of clarity among the teachers on the goals and objectives of the new program. The teachers may be having difficulties connecting the goals and objectives for the new instruction and assessment tools to their classroom practices.

The Bushman and Schnitker (n.d.) study on teacher attitudes to portfolio assessment, implementation, and practicability also concluded that and most respondents had problems with using portfolios as a result of the inadequate training they had received. The survey findings suggested that teachers saw portfolios as an effective practice, however, increased training was needed to accomplish the goals set for the portfolio.

#### Limitations of the Study

There were a number of limitations with this study. One of the important limitations of this study involved the collection of the data. The administration and the collection of the questionnaire was difficult. The teachers were not eager about the idea of answering the questionnaire as they had a heavy workload. In addition, the instructors were uneasy with the idea of an interview. Most teachers refused to be interviewed and the ones who were interviewed were hesitant in answering the questions, as it required information about the new program. They may have been fearful of being negative and may not have been as open as possible when answering some of the questions.

Having one person do the categorisation of the qualitative data was also another limitation of the study. Having another person classify the data as well so as to ensure the reliability of the categories would have made the study stronger.

The study cannot be generalised, as it is sight and situation specific. The results of the study are immediately applicable only to Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division.

#### Implication for Future Research

This study investigated the teachers' understanding of the new writing program at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. In this study, the training the teachers received was not researched. One thing, which could be done would be to look at the training the teachers receive. To understand how the teachers feel about the training, their perceptions could be investigated.

Also a more in-depth look at how the teachers are using the projects and the portfolio for instruction and assessment could be done. To be able to do this, procedures like classroom observations or interviews with the teachers could be carried out.

Investigating the students' perceptions would also be useful. The students' ideas on the projects and the portfolios, whether they see it as beneficial or not, could be researched.

Inconsistent understanding of the scale used for assessing projects, which came out through the qualitative data, also could be investigated. The teachers could be asked more questions on the use of the scale, how they are using it, and what points of the scale they believe should be improved or altered.



### Conclusion

This study investigated the understandings of the teachers of Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division of the projects and the portfolio for instruction and assessment. The data was collected through a questionnaire, and an interview.

The results revealed that the teachers have a positive attitude towards the new program. The teachers believe the new program is a good beginning, yet it needs to be improved. One participant stated that:

I think it is getting better and better every year. I am more comfortable than I was last year.

The teachers also see the projects and the portfolio better than traditional writing assessment, however, they are inconsistent with each other and with programs goals in their use of these tools, suggestions room for further improvement.

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# WRITING PROJECT 3

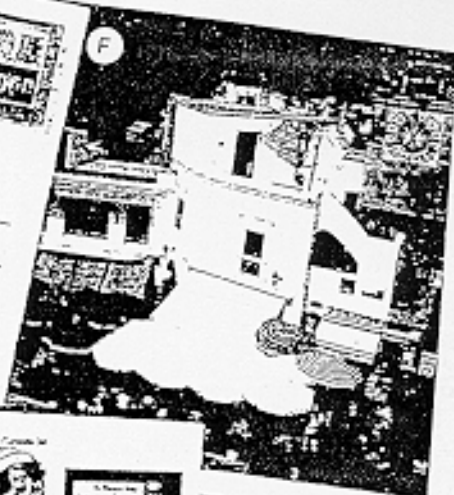
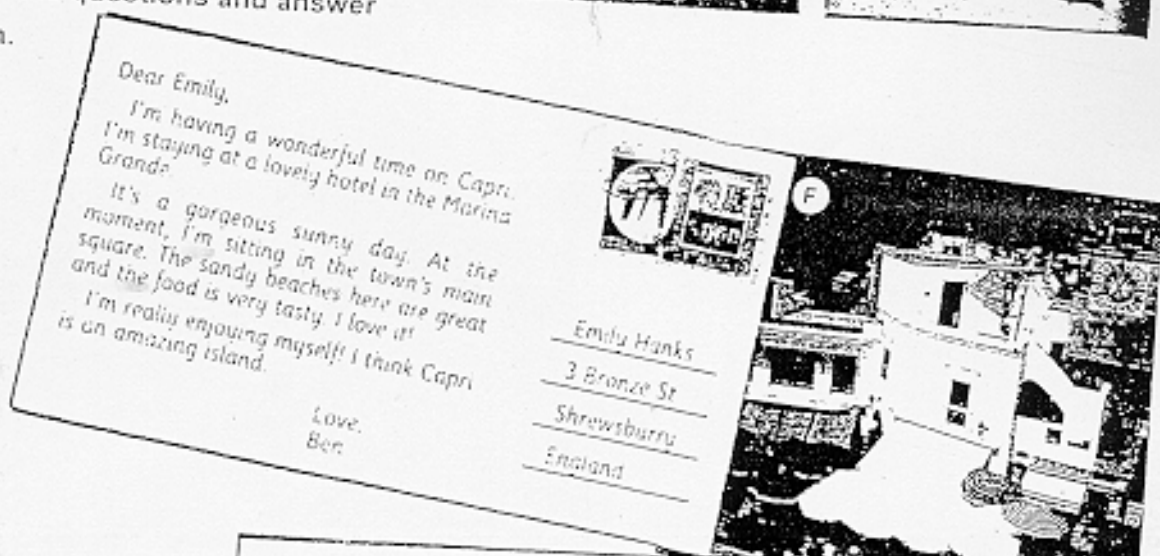
## TIME OFF

1. Match the words below to the pictures.

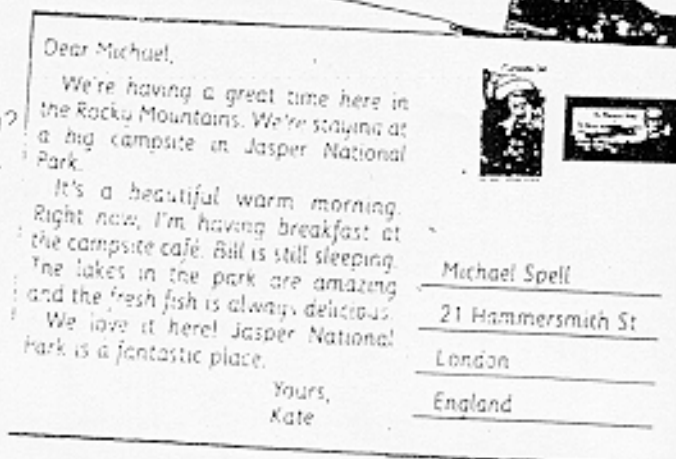
1. hotel .....
2. campsite .....
3. forest .....
4. square .....
5. café .....
6. lake .....
7. beach .....



2. Read the two postcards, then read the questions and answer them.



1. Who is on Capri?
2. Where is he staying?
3. What is the weather like in Capri?
4. What is the food like in Capri?



5. Where is Kate staying?
  6. What is she doing right now?
  7. Does she like Jasper National Park?
  8. How do the postcards start and how do they end?
- 

#### STUDY TIP

- We use the **present continuous** for **temporary actions happening now** i.e. at the moment of speaking  
 e.g. Right now, I am having breakfast ...  
 or **around the time of speaking**  
 e.g. We are staying at a lovely hotel in the Marina Grande.
  - We use the time expressions **now, right now, at the moment** and **at present** with the present continuous.
- 

#### 3. a. Write full sentences, as in the example.

1. Liz / read / in the hotel room

Liz is reading in the hotel room.

2. Mark / explore / the forest

.....

3. Jane / make / a sandcastle now

.....

4. She / take / photos of the castle

.....

5. They / buy / souvenirs at the moment

.....

6. My sister / sunbathe / and I / write / postcards

.....

7. They / have / coffee at the café

.....



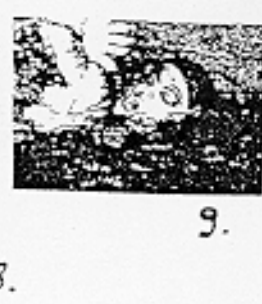
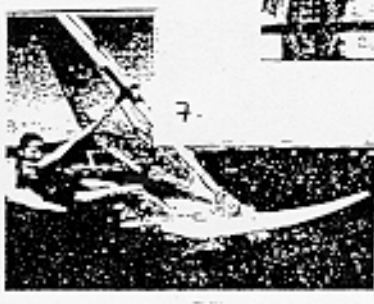
3

b. Which of the sentences in Ex. 3 describe the pictures below?



4. Look at the pictures. Then, put the verbs in the list into the present continuous and make sentences, as in the example.

SKI, SWIM, BUY SOUVENIRS, SUNBATHE, WINDSURF, HAVE LUNCH, READ A BOOK,  
PLAY VOLLEYBALL, EAT WATERMELON



#### STUDY TIP

- We do not normally use the verbs love, hate, like, dislike, think\*, have\* and believe in the present continuous.  
e.g. I think\* Capri is an amazing island. BUT, I am thinking\* of moving house because this one is really cold.
- e.g. I have\* two sisters but no brothers. BUT, I will call you later because I am having\* dinner now.

5. Look at the postcard extracts below and put the verbs in brackets into the present simple or present continuous.

1 Dear John,  
.....  
(have) a great  
time in Mexico. I  
.....  
(stay) at a lovely  
hotel in .....

2 Mary .....  
..... (swim)  
in the sea and Bob  
..... (visit)  
the museum .....

3 The food here is  
not bad. I .....  
(like) the fresh fruit  
and vegetables but I  
..... (hate)  
the fish.

4 We ..... (enjoy)  
ourselves. I  
(think) Ireland is a  
beautiful country  
  
Love,  
Karen

5 It ..... (be) very hot  
today. At the moment, I  
.....  
(sunbathe). The children  
.....  
(make) a sandcastle ...

6 Tony .....  
(windsurf) now. He  
(go) windsurfing every day.  
We ..... (have)  
lots of fun here.

6. Put the verbs in brackets into the present continuous. Then, match the sentences to the pictures.

1. Tony and Sue .....  
(have) a picnic at the moment.
2. John .....  
(fish) now.
3. They .....  
(sail) their boat.
4. She .....  
(visit) the ruins.
5. They .....  
(eat) ice-cream.
6. She .....  
(throw) snowballs.
7. They .....  
(have) fun at the funfair.



7. a. Read these postcard extracts and answer the questions below.

1. Who likes the place where they are?
2. Who doesn't like the place where they are?

- A. ... I really like it here! The island is **gorgeous**. Love, Amy
- B. ... We hate the campsite. It's a **terrible** place! Love, Peggy.
- C. ... We all love the mountains. They are **amazing**! Love, Greg.
- D. ... I really don't like the hotel I am staying. It is **awful**! Love, Ross.

b. Replace the adjectives in **bolds** with words from the list.

HORRIBLE. BEAUTIFUL. WONDERFUL. DISGUSTING

8. Write the postcard below in full sentences. Then, answer the questions.

Dear Joe,

1. I / have / wonderful time / in Malta. We / stay / at a lovely hotel in Valletta.

.....

2. It / be / warm and sunny today. Right now, I / sunbathe / on the beach and / write / this postcard. Jill / visit / a museum and Diana / have breakfast / at a café. The water here / be / very blue and the beach / be / beautiful.

.....

.....

.....

3. We / really enjoy / ourselves! I / think / Malta / be / a fantastic island.

.....

Love, Laura

## 6

1. Who is the postcard from?
2. Who is the postcard to?
3. How does the postcard start? How does it end?
4. Which part is about the weather and what everyone is doing?
5. Which part is about Laura's impressions of the place?

---

**WRITING / TIP**

- When we write a holiday postcard to a friend, we start by writing the name of the place where we are and where we are staying
  - In the second part we write about the weather and what we (and the people we are with) are doing at the moment. Then, we say what we like about the place ( e.g. lakes, beaches, the food etc.)
  - We finish our postcard by giving our impressions of the place.
  - We use the **present continuous** to write about what we are doing, and **adjectives** to make our piece of writing more interesting.
-

## Appendix B

### **Teacher Questionnaire**

Dear Colleagues,

I am a student in the MA TEFL 2002 Program at Bilkent University. I am conducting a study on your perceptions of projects (teacher assigned works covering specific topics) and portfolios (student folders holding projects and other assignments), their uses and benefits in the new writing program. The questionnaire will be used for my thesis.

In order to obtain the necessary information for this study, I will be asking your opinions on the use and benefit of projects and portfolios for students.

Please answer the questionnaire fully and honestly. Your answers will provide valuable data and will be useful and helpful not only for my thesis, but also for you and our program. Your answers will be kept entirely confidential. The researcher is the only one who will see the individual answers. If you need any other information you can contact either my advisor or me.

Thank you for your help and co-operation.

**My Advisor**

**Assistant Professor**

**Bill Snyder**

**M. Petek Subaşı**

**Tel: 0-535-2203363**

**e-mail: peteksubasi@hotmail.com**

**Part I:****A- Background Information**

Please tick (✓) the appropriate boxes and provide the necessary information below.

**1. Total years of teaching experience:**

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

**2. How long have you been teaching in this institution?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

**3. How long have you been teaching writing?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10years
- 11-15 years

- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

**4. How long have you been teaching writing in this institution?**

- Less than 1 year
- 1-5 years
- 6-10 years
- 11-15 years
- 16-20 years
- More than 20 years

**Part B**

Please tick (✓) the box for each item. Please choose **only one** answer for each statement.

**Strongly Agree: 5    Agree: 4    Uncertain: 3    Disagree: 2    Strongly Disagree: 1**

Teacher Perceptions of projects and portfolios	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
1. I like teaching writing.					
2. I like using the projects to assess students.					
3. I like using the portfolio to assess students.					
4. We should use projects as assessment tools.					
5. We should use the portfolio as an assessment tool.					
6. Traditional writing assessment is more beneficial for the students than the projects.					
7. Traditional writing assessment is more beneficial for the students than the portfolio.					
8. We should use traditional writing assessment in order to get better evidence of a students writing ability than the projects can provide.					
9. We should use traditional writing assessment in order to get better evidence of a students writing ability than the portfolio can provide.					
10. Assessing the projects requires a large amount of work time.					
11. Assessing the portfolio requires a large amount of work time.					
12. The projects are beneficial assessment tools for teachers.					
13. The portfolio is a beneficial assessment tool for teachers.					
14. I can assess my students in detail through the projects.					
15. I can assess my students in detail through the portfolio.					
16. The portfolio displays student development over time.					
17. Portfolios are primarily student folders with their work neatly kept in them.					
18. The projects are beneficial for the students.					
19. The portfolio is beneficial for the students.					



Teacher Perceptions of projects and portfolios	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
20. The scale that we use assists me in grading the student projects more easily.					
21. The scale that we use assists me in grading the student portfolio more easily.					
22. I look at writing development as a part of evaluating student portfolios.					
23. I assign grades to each project.					
24. I assign grades to each portfolio entry.					
25. I assess the projects on a continuous basis.					
26. I assess the portfolios on a continuous basis.					
27. The projects are an important part of assessing student achievement.					
28. The portfolio is an important part of assessing student achievement.					
29. The projects provide evidence of meeting the new writing program's goals and objectives.					
30. The portfolio provides evidence of meeting the new writing program's goals and objectives.					
31. Through the projects we can learn how much the student has learned.					
32. Through the portfolios we can learn how much the student has learned.					
33. The projects help me adjust to individual levels of achievement.					
34. The portfolios help me adjust to individual levels of achievement.					
35. Through the projects we can evaluate learning outcomes which can not be evaluated with paper and pencil tests.					
36. Through the portfolio we can evaluate learning outcomes which can not be evaluated with paper and pencil tests.					
37. The projects encourage students to become reflective learners.					
38. The portfolio encourages students to become reflective learners.					

Teacher Perceptions of projects and portfolios	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
	1	2	3	4	5
39. The projects encourage students to develop skills in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their work.					
40. The portfolio encourages students to develop skills in evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of their work.					

**Part D: Please answer the questions as briefly as possible.**

1. What are the purposes of the projects?

---



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---



---

2. What are the purposes of the portfolios?

---



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3. I evaluate the projects through

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---



---



---

4. I evaluate the portfolio through

---

---

---

---

5. The portfolio we use also includes...

(Please check all applicable).

- student questions
- notes
- outlines
- initial drafts
- revised drafts
- the final product
- self evaluation of the work
- others (please specify)\_\_\_\_\_.

6. I believe the assessment of writing should be done through \_\_\_\_\_

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## Appendix C

### Interview Questions of the Director of the Program

1. Why did you see a need to change the writing program?
2. What kind of changes did you make?
3. What are the differences between the old program and the new writing program?
4. Why did you decide to use projects?
5. Why did you decide to use a portfolio?
6. What kind of training did the teachers receive on using the projects and portfolios?
7. How do you teach the projects?(what is your understanding of the projects?)
8. How do use the portfolio? (what is your understanding of the portfolios?)
9. Can the portfolio here be used to truly assess student's writing development and ability?

## Appendix D

### Interview Questions of the Program Teachers'

1. What is your understanding of the projects?
2. What is your understanding of the projects used in this institution?
3. How do you teach the projects?
4. Are the projects different from previous writing assignments? How?
5. What is your understanding of the portfolio?
6. What is your understanding of the portfolio used in this institution?
7. How do you do use the portfolio?
8. Can the portfolio here be used to truly assess student's writing development and ability?
9. Do you use the portfolio in this way? Why / Why not?
10. When do you assess the portfolio?
11. Does the portfolio help you assess students? How?
12. Do you look at the portfolio to check students' development over time? Is this part of your assessment of the students'?
13. Does the scale help you evaluate development of the students with the portfolios? How?
14. Do you like this assessment system? Why?
15. If not what would make you like this system of assessment more?
16. Would a different way of assessing make you more positive?
17. Is the current program better or worse? How?

Appendix E  
INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Interview with the Director of the Program

P: I would like to ask you questions on the writing program.

A: Sure

P: Why did you see a need to change the writing program?

A: Actually it all depends on one of my thesis, which I did years ago. We saw that the students could listen, sometimes could answer the reading questions but, they could not express themselves in a written form. So we tried to make some changes in order to make them write well, express themselves well, and also after some research on needs analysis here, we realized that they would need this writing program in the future. First of all in their school life and this university and after that their career. That is why we made some changes.

P: Ok. What kind of changes did you make?

A: First of all we did not have a separate writing program. Students were just doing the exercises in the course book. And as you know most of the course books have almost the same activities formal letters, and description without giving any information or without giving any instructions. So we found out our objectives I mean at least paragraph writing and then in the freshman course they are going to study essay writing plus report writing so we said ok at least we should give them the core of writing academic writing and the most important change I guess we made the distinction between private writing and academic writing. We are not interested in private writing which include you know personal letters, love letters, or poems or let us say short stories. We just focus on academic writing basically paragraph.

P: What are the differences between old writing program and the new writing program?

A: As I said before we did not have a separate book, we did not have a separate program and we did not have seminars. Most of our teachers were not familiar with what we meant by writing at least you know this is a narrow scope actually. Just the paragraph writing. So now we focus on paragraph writing and components of writing and also types of the paragraph. Because of time limitations we cannot deal with all the kinds we just concentrate on contrast comparison, cause, opinion, and the a little bit effect. That is the biggest effect I guess now we have a special schedules, special components, special book and the materials.

P: Why did you

A: Because our students I am talking about

P: .....

A: That is the biggest change I forgot our students CA and CB groups which are all elementary have a lot of difficulty in expressing themselves in terms of grammar language. So writing has some components one of them is language, vocabulary, and then organization and then mechanics. For organization and for organization we have a different book but for language we decided to prepare our students through these projects and we concentrated on very basic structures. You know tenses, modals, passives and then conjunctions what not. Our students unfortunately despite the projects have some problems in terms of the language. They know the organization they know mostly vocabulary how to use the vocabulary where to use them correctly, where to use the correct words but they still had the problem of you know actually let us say correct grammar that is why we decided to do projects that is the first reason. Second reason was that we prepared I guess and I hope a very guided materials so through those materials students were able to do very big brain storming in terms of vocab. and in terms of language. Because in general writing internationally let us say we do not have a concept like brain storming in terms of the grammar itself. There is a brainstorming you know you give the words, you give the ideas but what we were tried to do was brainstorming but the core was the grammar itself. I mean so let us say our first aim in the projects was to prepare our students in terms of the language itself.

P: OK. and why did you decide to use portfolio?

A: It was the first year so I myself wanted to see what was going on. That is why all of our teachers kept portfolios and sometimes we looked at those portfolios and the students' written work so we tried to see where we were going. Did it work or did it need any modifications you know any changes or the most important question was if we had to continue or stop. So after we saw in the portfolios we decided our students were ready for the new book basically organization.

P: What kind of training did the teacher receive on projects and portfolio?

A: oh my god a lot actually a lot before each project there was a seminar I do not know seminar was a right word there or a workshop. All of our teachers received the copies in advance and then I prepared some activities related to the projects in order to make the you know lesson less boring because if you are talking to students and if you ask them a question about writing their first answer is "writing is difficult" and "writing is boring". That is why let us say before each project I do not remember number actually four or five or six we will see that before each project we prepared a seminar plus I prepared extra materials for the project. So it was a lot. And then before we started the book the you know "write out" we also

prepared some seminars on each chapter. There are four chapters and they received four plus one extra seminar for the profile.

P: Any training on the portfolio.

A: Oh yea. Because most of our colleagues were not familiar with the idea. So I prepared a portfolio and I tried to teach them how to use the portfolios, how to assess them, and how to keep the portfolios. You know I am not talking about the physical difficulties but what to put in your portfolio. First of all our students wrote a paragraph then the teachers collected those paragraphs and they just put some symbols on you know on the lines which had mistakes then students received them back they rewrote that paragraph and then they were evaluated. But we put these 2-3 copies in the portfolio in order to see the changes and the improvements. Improvement of the students.

P: What is your understanding of the project?

A: Ohh the project as I have told you basically the project concentrated on vocabulary, and grammar itself.

P: Not for here but for general what is you....

A: HHHHHH for general actually there are very different kinds of projects let us say what we did was small tiny projects but in general what I understand it actually depends on the students' level but if I were asked to prepare a project I would after giving the necessary information about a kind of essay I would just give my students a topic and that topic should need to be research through books so students should go to the library, they should collect information, and then they should write an essay I am just talking about an essay this can be a report this can be a summary but let us say basically essay and students should write an essay on that topic.

P: And what is your understanding of portfolio?

A: In general I haven't seen people using portfolio in Turkey very much actually. This is just like keeping a journal you know or let us say if you make it more personal it is like keeping a diary. Student throughout the year should put I am talking about just writing should put what they produce in the portfolio and the most important thing they themselves should see their improvement. But here we keep the portfolios and we see the development and we share our ideas with those students.

P: So this is your understanding of portfolios

A. Ohhh. Yea.

P: Sharing ideas...



A: Sharing ideas, seeing what is necessary, what is not and the I guess most importantly to decide where to stop portfolios and what to start and you know what kind of program what our students need in order to see them.

P: Can the portfolios be used to assess students' writing ability?

A: It is one of the ways. And also it has I guess another advantage you know almost all of the students are afraid of taking exams so students this is a kind of take home exam so it is one of the ways because I believe writing you know when we say sit here is a topic and write a paragraph. This is very unnatural. So when we from this point of view portfolios can be very good tool of assessment I guess.

P: so you are assessing portfolio

A: Ohh yes.

P: Is this effective and is this included in the overall grade.

A: Yes. In their overall grade not we have you know different criteria here one of them is classroom something assessment and we include the portfolio results in that part I cannot remember the exam name now.

P: Is there a percentage in the I mean end of year assessment?

A: Percentage it all depends you know let us say throughout the year reading is 25% so we arrange the evaluation according to how much that skill is that with. So almost throughout the year writing is 20-25% in this part portfolios 7-8%.

P: Each project entry has a percentage and the portfolio.

A: Yes overall.....

P: Thank you

A: You are welcome.

#### **AFTER A LITTLE PAUSE**

A: But about our portfolios we had a small problem because most of our colleagues could not see the difference between students' folders and portfolios. During our training sessions we decided that sometimes we were going to refer to those portfolios and written work and we were going to make some changes according to the data we had. This is a good beginning there are problems I know but most of our colleagues thought that they were simple folders in order to keep students' work. This was I guess one of the disadvantages let us say because of the hard work this was something unfortunately avoided.

P: Can we .....

A: Let us say not all of them some of them. But they received the necessary training.

P: Thank you for taking part.

Participant 1:

P: Thank you for taking part in the interview. What is your understanding of the projects in general?

B: Which project?

P: That we use in teaching writing.

B: in teaching writing....

P: What I understand from the project is the is a kind of aid just to lead us teachers to help our students or how we can help our students. The information we should convey clearly the message clearly and the methods the projects we are talking about should cover the methods of how we can teach that or we can give the information clearly.

P: What is your understanding of the project students.....

B: you mean in CA classes.

P: Yes.

B: Frankly speaking this year's either the book or the photocopies given to us that is my personal opinion it is not I think it is not enough. There are some let me say some work was or is OK. I get the help of it at most but some of them I just found them insufficient.

P: They are not enough for the....

B: For teaching

P: How do you teach the project?

B: We have some meetings before start a new lesson let me say any kind of paragraph we have some meetings which conducted by Recep bey and almost all of them were or have been useful enough. Because in those meetings you can talk or discuss and you get the points. But in the book especially there are really I think some problems that should be clear clarified

P: In the writing book prepared by the institution or the writing book....

B: The new writing book

P: The one prepared by the institution

B: Yes.

P: What is your understanding of the portfolio?

B: From the beginning of the year to the end whatever we have done and whatever we want the students to do and our purpose the information we should give should be involved.

P: Do you use it.....how we use

B: I tried to use it like this

P: Can the portfolio the one we use true to use for assessment ?.....

B: I cannot say totally “yes” we try to do it. But it is a good working. But we should develop it

P: Does this portfolio help you assess your students?

B: yes in some way yes.

P: .....

B: It is my part of my assessment.

P: Does the scale help you evaluate the development of your students?

B: of course the scale helps me evaluate then why have one?

P: with the portfolio

B: Yes, it does. At least it helps me not to be subjective.

P: more objective

B: Hiiii

P: Do you like this assessment tool? The new writing assessment

B: Yes.

P: Why?

B: Why? Even if I said before it needs criticisms and it should be improved but it is a good way.

P: What are your criticisms?

B: There are some exercises practices which should be it should have been written in the book

P: They are missing

B: They are missing and the practice the time we give the students to practice in the classroom paragraphs I think is limited.

P: .....

P: what are the areas would you like to make changes?

B: Yes, for example we started the format I mean write a paragraph consciously let me say we let them write in the second part of the year I think it should have been started long before

P: maybe in the first semester

B: Yes. Because I believe it is not important for students write a paragraph when they reach a certain level in the second language. Soon after they can get some structures even in a simple way when they start to express themselves in the second language they can write also. That is why I wanted to start to be started earlier

P: What do you think of the current program. Is it better than the previous? .....

B: It is different I cannot say clearly because in the first term last year in the first term we applied something different it was prepared by our academic coordinator and it was parallel to

the structure they learned in their course book. For the students it just to answer some questions by answering by combining them in a paragraph. They found I mean the students found it easy because they know the structure easy and pleasy. They enjoyed themselves. And they liked writing. But this year in the first semester we did something different. They wrote some about some topics and they had sample paragraphs and they tried to write a paragraph and trying to be to make it similar to the one in their hands. So in this step the students were not aware what they are doing. When we started to teach to work study writing with the book. They understood what it is and they had some difficulties. Even to produce topic sentences

P: So it was a problem.

B: Yes, it was a problem and during the second term the time is not enough for you. For example I want students to criticize themselves and sometimes even if there is not enough time we write some work on the blackboard they just read it and they talk about it. I just guide them I never intervened. So they learned how to criticize and what they did or what they do while they are writing.

P: So they learned on their own.

B: H11 h1 h1 But they should have enough time for because it took 2 class time

P: Takes a long time

B: H1 h1 h1

P: awareness of the issue important?

B: Of course

P: Do you think we need to ..... portfolio teaching here?

B: No. Some part of it yes. But it should not be expected to do it perfectly year by year

P: Each year

B: It will improve it is a good start.

P: it is a beginning.

B: h1 h1 h1

P: Thank you very much for participating answering questions

B: I thank you

Participant 2:

P: Good morning. Thank you for taking part in my interview. What is your understanding of the project?

C: To be honest I do not have much information about project writing but I guess it is something in which students do some kind of research and it is something like ongoing process I guess. And it may involve group work or pair work also when we say project I guess. That is what I know.

P: Ok. What is your understanding of the project in this institution?

C: We use projects mainly to not teach review grammar points that we covered before hand and we had a focus for four of them and the first one is simple present tense and students wrote something afterwards but they were used to reinforce the grammar.

P: Are the projects different from the previous writing assignments? Previous years'

C: Last year we did that too but this time we have something longer and also more complete I can say. It was handouts were like units we students study different parts points of grammar and this year they were like units

P: Ok and what do you understand from the portfolio?

C: Again I do not have much information because we have never done it before but it should be an ongoing process I guess and assessment is also ongoing.

P: what do you understand from the portfolio in this institution?

C: I do not think we use portfolios I mean we put students' writings in a file but that was all. We did not use the whole file to assess students' writing progress or anything like that we put the separate things in the same file. And we gave grades during the quizzes or exams but students' classroom productions were not assessed.

P: So you did not assess the portfolio.

C: Not really no.

P: Do you look at the portfolio the students' development over time and if you do so is it part of your assessment?

C: It is not part of the assessment. But students look at them to see their development

P: So you do not look at them

C: Hi hi hi

P: Does the scale help you evaluate the development of the students with the portfolio?

C: Yes. We are always given a scale and it helps and also we have to use the scale. But we do not have one separate scale I mean it may change sometimes we have this is the total is 10

points you should give grammar 3 and vocab 2 and something like that and we have more detailed scales

P: How do you assess students' writing and in general how do you give a grade?

C: Beforehand we're told what we expect. We have sessions and then we have scales we use them as criteria.

P: In overall assessment what are the percentages? Portfolio project

C: I do not know. Projects were done in the first term we had four I think one of them two of them were total 50 and in the second term we started writing paragraphs we had 4 different paragraphs. They were mainly 20 or 15 so second term we had more something like 80-100.

P: and you do not grade the portfolio.

C: No.

P: Do you like this assessment?

C: I like holistic assessment but I can see the reason why we use this kind of scale because we have 2000 students and there should be a unity but I like holistic assessment more and I do not think grammar is so important in writing because we have grammar parts in every exam that we give in the quizzes also so we should mainly focus on organization and content and that is not possible all the time because sometimes we give the content.

P: Do you think the portfolio should be .....

C: Not in this form because in the portfolio we have we always have separate things I mean for example we last week I put some comparison paragraphs this week I have put some opinion paragraphs so they are not totally related to each other but if I mean we did something else I would say "yes".

P: There was change in the writing program. Different from the previous one. Better or worse than this what do you think?

C: not worse projects are mainly the same the only difference is that last year we did not call them projects but we did the same thing. As for the writing paragraphs last year we used the book and this year we had another book but written by one of the colleagues but it was more suitable for our needs I guess. That is why the book is better because last year students bought the books we did not use even half of it. So this one was better.

P: If you were to make changes what would be the changes for the coming year?

C: I do not know I cannot say what we're doing is not good but it is not portfolio project writing so we should be aware of that part if what we want to do is this it is OK. No problem the program is good. But if we think we are doing portfolio project writing this is not. We should do it accordingly. Putting the students' paper in a file is not portfolio writing. If we

know that, that is fine I f we say this is suitable for us, we are going to do it no problem. But if not, we should know that this is not that.

P: This should be called something different.

C: Actually I do not know what our institutions' objectives are. Next year there will be a curriculum study so maybe I know that

P: Do you thin k it will be based on the goals and objectives or.....

C: I do not know actually the program was ready and we were given the program but I do not know what they had in mind I know what they had said so far their aim is to prepare them for freshman writing courses I mean basically the aim is to teach organization if that is the aim it is fine they know how to organize paragraph but they have difficulty in supporting their opinions.

P: They do not have the language

C: They do not have the language they do not have common language some of them

P: Thank you very much for taking part in the interview and answering my questions

C: Your are welcome

Participant 3:

P: Good morning. Thank you for taking part in my interview. What is your understanding of the project?

D: It is a pleasure.

P: What is your understanding of a project?

D: A project should have an aim first of all. And it should have a target. But there is a distinction when I say aim. The target is when you get to teach writing reading what so ever and the aim is while you are doing that. Writing project what is your aim in doing that. You have aims of grammar or aims of writing structure etc. That should be taken into account considering what teaching about it. Preparing and doing a project.

P: What is your understanding of a project in this institution?

D: OK. I think they are very leading because they were not well prepared I mean not 100% percent well prepared but they were quite leading and they were quite good for students for their level especially the projects that we use in the first term. They were generally based on an aim and they had targeted grammar target and they were generally based on visual things which I find very helpful for the students to understand the project and their aim.

P: What was the aim of the project here then?

D: Well I think it was in the first term it was the aim of getting the students used to the writing in English and of course they did not have much knowledge about the language they really had a lot of problem not only in writing organized writing style but they had every simple problem writing is very simple adequate sentence so I think that was the aim in the first place in the first term because to get them write in the first place was the aim according to the grammar structure or to make them understand that the pattern the structures had not aim just as in Turkish so to make them realize that. So I think they were not much organized writing but they were much like getting the students write I mean they were very reluctant about it and they do not write about it. They have a lot of good excuses about that. They do not know the language they were very new to the language they even say that we do not have the ability to write in their mother tongue in Turkish so I think it was to get them write and it was a kind of preparation in the second term organized writing

P: Beginning for the .....

D: Yes

P: And what's your understanding of portfolio?



D: Well that is the question. I think they should be in connection to the to each other I mean that was good in here I mean the first term we have something in the second term we have something different but they were very much in connection I believe.

P: What was the second semester

D: Well in the second one we had a book I do not consider as a project and I find very difficulties doing that book in the classroom I really found difficult the first one ... it was a project you had aims targets it was well prepared it was visual that is very helpful for the students I guess and the second one is an organized one the first one I do not consider as an organized writing but they were kind of a interactive following each other not interactive but following it was necessary so that is what I understand from a portfolio

P: And what's your understanding of portfolio in this institution?

D: Well I think it was quite good but it really force students because they had a lot of different things to cope with they had their course book they had their grammar references their grammar supplementaries and we never did not never but we did not pay much attention to the writing in their course books so ..... **run out of cassette**

I think they did not like it and they had a lot of problems with the portfolio but I think I mean students could not realize it really worked well because we understand it from the last exams and writings because we can see and the students as well they can see that they are doing something good at last at the end of the term it proves to be right

P. And how do you use the portfolio? (the interviewee did not understand the question and you provide explanation and expand on the question)

D: Yes, I do keep their writings especially to compare and to show them and it helps but I really had a bad luck this term because I changed classes a lot but and I just could not keep continue with the same class so it was a problem for me to I can't see the real effects of writing done in this institution but especially in the second term as I was involved writing in the classroom I had this folder for every students we had the folder with my partner for every student I generally kept one example of one type structure of writing I just could not keep all the homework everything that they wrote but as they came and go as we checked I gave them feedback I was showing them they saw what they did and I was not only seeing them but also reminded them what they did in the first term "do you remember this" we did it but they did it I know that so generally I made references "do you remember this ok we did this" that is parallel that is what we did and also helped with the grammar too. Do you remember the writing project we did this" it also helped too

P: Did the portfolio we did here really assess the students' development?

D: Well, No. Because the aim here is to prepare them for an organized formal writing of course we do not have creative writing here and they are not free to express themselves and they are not free to exercise the patterns structures but it was a good start for them

P: how do you assess the portfolio?

D: We have a profile here that we use for every entry for example we generally do the writings for 20 pts we divide them into groups we give certain pts to topic sentence structure to coherence to grammar but they are not very high I mean we do not give much pts for the grammar we do not discourage the students while they are writing because they always have that problem of grammar and we give have different entries and I myself do not believe in assessing overall I do not like that

P: you do not assess portfolio in the overall grade for example projects 10 pts portfolio 5 pts you do not do it really

D: (did not understand the question and provide explanation) yes I think especially I find it very helpful not to discourage the students because their problem is that they believe that they are not creative and moreover than being creative they believe in their English is not enough for writing so we say we are not doing creative writing and we are not giving or taking much points for grammar what you express and how you express how you use or adapt the structure I think that is important to encourage the students and generally it helps

P: .....

D: Yes but I have problems with the book

P: The one prepared by the institution

D: Yes it's nice it is a good beginning but it is not enough I mean I had to a lot of extra things in the classroom other than the book I had to give them more examples I had to do more different studies about the paragraph writing more activities because generally the students get bored and they do not just like read and write they want to do the activities in the classroom so and I believe it should be visual I mean I believe that authentic material and visual material help students develop more ideas. So I think it lacks that but other than that the book is fine.

P: would you make a change in the .....

D: well no comment can I say that?

P: No

D: Well I should make students more interactive in the classroom I just prefer to do that in the classroom we sometimes do what we want as teachers we do what we are supposed to do as every class and every students is different we have to adapt it so sometimes you can adapt it

sometimes you can just bring up a new idea for the classroom I think in the general yes it is adapted but there are little things to be added or dropped

P: Program in general terms

D: Writing

P: Yes

D: I have been here for 2 terms s I do not have any idea about it.

P: Than k you for taking part in the study and interview

D: It was pleasure thank you.

Participant 4:

P: Thank you very much for taking part in the interview. What is your understanding of a project?

S: In my view a project is a kind of activity where students are given a topic and then they go on and do a research on it and come up with a piece of writing.

P: What is your understanding of a project in this institution?

S: In my institution projects are not perceived as the way I have described before. We have a writing book and we introduce the students this with the necessary grammar structures, linkers and connectors and we have checklist like close paragraph etc etc. Then we ask the students to write a close paragraph. That is all.

P: And how do you teach the project?

S: As I said we start just like any course book we teach the idea for example opinion paragraph and we introduce the necessary structure we give some examples we do the outline and we then ask them to write an opinion paragraph.

P: Are the projects different from the different year's .....

S: Well I cannot comment on it because last year I was not teaching writing at all. So I do not know.

P: What is your understanding of the portfolio?

S: By portfolio I understand that there is a continuous assessment of the project and every students have a file in which all the writings pieces are kept and at the end while or while they are writing and during the term the teacher consistently check their files to see if they made any progresses.

P: And what is your understanding of the portfolio in this institution?

S: Well we tried to do it but I do not think we are effectively because we do keep records but we do not assess them efficiently. I have a file for each student but I do not go over it.

P: Do you give a final grade?

S: No, I do not.

P: Do you look at the portfolio to check students...?

S: Well actually this is the aim of the portfolio but I have not done it so far. This is the end of the term by the way. So

P.....

S: If it worked efficiently I would really like it but it simply does not work.

P: How would you change it?

S: Well actually we have so much workload that we do not have time for writing projects at all. At least for checking the development of students' etc. I have like 30 hours of teaching. After 30 hours I cannot imagine myself checking the portfolio. If I had time I'd take delight. I like it.

P: If you were able to make changes what kind of changes would you make?

S: Well the problem is I think we teach the writing well they can easily support their ideas with majors and minors they know the linkers and they do not know the grammar. So they come up with writing which look wonderful in structure with all the transitions and linkers but they cannot even make a sentence with a conditional structure. So I would try to integrate grammar more to the writing. As we give feedback I'd like to give also on the comment on the content of what they have written because we always check the structure. I really do not care about what the students really lives.

P: .....

S: exactly that what happens?

P: Thanks a lot

Participant 5:

P: Thank you for taking part in the interview

P: What is your understanding of a project?

A: OK A project is a style of writing and first you brainstorm with those kids what to write about and then make an outline and then we guide them in order to write in such a way such as a close paragraph. That's the project that we do in this institution here.

P: OK this is the way you do in this instruction

A: Yes, according to the style we teach the kids.

P: OK. And how do you teach the project?

A: As I have said we first brainstorming and giving outline and guiding them to write and then eventually have them write it, get them rough draft and work on that and then give out the rough draft, have them correct their mistakes according to your marks, and then assign a final draft.

P: Are the projects different from previous year's

A: Not really

P. And what's your understanding of portfolio?

A: I think it is really beneficial for students, keep track of what they have written. And how they are written and the mistakes they have done. Whether they increase their writing style.

P.....in this institution.

A: I think that the teachers do individually. There is no feedback to the content. After each teacher to keep track of students portfolio

P: And how do you use portfolio?

A: Normally I grade them after the rough draft I grade them and no I correct them and then they submit their final drafts I grade them. And then both the teacher and the students keep track of their increase.

P: Are the portfolio used to keep track of students' development?

A: Yes. I think so. If it is done efficiently

P: is it done efficiently in this institution?

A: I think it depends on each teacher

P: When do you assess the portfolio?

A: No, after each project. Which is we try to give a project as we mark or everyone.

P: do the portfolio help you assess the student?

A: Yes.

P: Does the scale help you evaluate student with the portfolio

A: Yes it does

P: Because I think the writing is very important part of learning English practically everyone can speak or everyone can understand little you know while they are listening or everyone can understand while they read. But I think actually how good a student writes is how good their English is.

P: ok

P: change.....

A: No

P: anything t change

A: I am comfortable with the book we are using so and not being too naive help the teachers and students because bore both of us.

P: The current program and the previous year

A: I think it is getting better and better every year. I am more comfortable than I was last year.

P: So you are happy with the projects and portfolios used

A: Yes.

P: Thank you