

THE EFFECTS OF PORTFOLIO ASSESSMENT ON READING, LISTENING AND WRITING SKILLS OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PREP CLASS STUDENTS

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Özet

Portfolyo değerlendirme, eğitimin çeşitli kademelerinde kullanılmaktadır ve yabancı dil öğretimi bu alanlardan biridir. Bu araştırma, portfolyo değerlendirmenin yabancı dil hazırlık eğitimi gören lise öğrencilerinin okuma, dinleme ve yazma becerileri üzerine etkilerini incelemeyi ve öğrencilerin portfolyo değerlendirmeye ilişkin görüşlerini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmanın kendisi, yaşları 15 ile 16 arasında değişen ve İngilizce hazırlık okuyan lise sınıfları arasından random olarak seçilmiş biri deney (n=22) diğeri kontrol (n=22) grubu olmak üzere iki grup üzerinde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Kontrol grubunda dersler dersin programına göre yapılmış, deney grubunda ise ders programına portfolyo ve portfolyo değerlendirme etkinlikleri entegre edilerek işlenmiştir. Çalışmanın sonucunda, yabancı dil öğretiminde portfolyo değerlendirmenin yazma becerilerinde anlamlı düzeyde gelişime neden olduğu ancak, benzer etkiyi okuma ve dinleme becerileri üzerinde göstermediği bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır. Ayrıca, öğrencilerin açık uçlu sorulara verdikleri yanıtların çözümüne göre, portfolyo değerlendirmenin adil bir yöntem olduğu, geleneksel test uygulamalarına göre daha gerçekçi bir yaklaşım olduğu, sorumluluğu artırdığı, motive ettiği gibi olumlu; portfolyo çalışmasının zaman aldığı, özdeğerlendirme yapmanın, ödevleri yeniden gözden geçirip düzeltmenin zor olduğu gibi olumsuz sonuçlara ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Portfolyo, portfolyo değerlendirme, performans-tabanlı değerlendirme, yabancı dil öğretimi, İngilizce dil öğretimi

Abstract

Portfolio assessment has been in use at various levels of education and foreign language teaching is one of them. This study aimed to find out the effects of portfolio assessment on reading, listening and writing skills of students who enrolled in a secondary school language preparatory class and to analyze the opinions of those students on portfolio assessment. The study was implemented on randomly selected two groups, treatment (n=22) and control (n=22), from secondary school English preparatory classes where the ages of students were 15 and 16. Traditional course program was administered in the control group, whereas portfolio assessment activities were integrated into the program in the treatment group. The findings showed that portfolio assessment had significant influence on students' writing skills; however, same results were not found for the reading and listening skills. Also, the analysis of students' answers to the open-ended questions showed that portfolio assessment is a fair method; compared to traditional applications of assessment, it is a more down-to-earth approach; it increases responsibility of students and motivates them. Students' answers also revealed some negative results, such as portfolio studies take time and self-evaluating, reviewing and correcting students' works is a difficult task.

Key Words: Portfolio, portfolio assessment, performance-based assessment, foreign language teaching, English language teaching

I. Introduction

The theory of constructivism, which has gained importance since the second half of the 20th century, provides a wide theoretical framework from design of learning settings to construction of assessment processes. Therefore today, while there is a shift from traditional learning settings to student-centred learning settings, there are also innovations in assessment procedures, where the change is from summative assessment to formative assessment. These innovations involve thinking of alternatives, which require questioning the learning process and using learning and assessment activities together rather than habitual testing applications. Boud (1995) stresses that the assessment process shouldn't be thought only as an instrument to give students a diploma, but it should also be a process that leads up to student development and better learning conditions and applications. Such alternative views on assessment have given rise to new approaches like portfolio assessment.

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Portfolio assessment has been used extensively since mid '80s. The idea of using portfolios as an instrument in performance-based assessment is not new. From past to present, especially painters, artists, writers, models and photographers have exhibited their vocational and acquired skills through portfolios (Zollman & Jones, 1994). In spite of its limited use in Turkey, it has been frequently used in other countries. In recent years, portfolios have been utilized for the same purposes, as an assessment instrument and as part of activities to improve students' foreign language skills. The results in some of the studies mentioned below show that portfolio assessment has positive effects on especially writing skills of students. However, studies analyzing the effects of portfolio assessment on students' reading and listening skills are limited. This study, aims to define the effects of portfolio assessment on secondary school students' writing, reading and listening skills and qualitatively identify the students' opinions on portfolio assessment, the application of which is still new in Turkey.

Many educators, writers and researchers discuss the merits of using portfolios as an assessment instrument. For example, Calfee and Perfumo (1993) stress that using portfolios for assessment is important to show the learners' competence, rather than only choosing the correct answers and especially portfolio assessment provides more information about the learners, rather than just doing mechanical grading. Portfolios orient the students to produce various types of more authentic works and urge them to be more creative. Besides, portfolio assessment gives the learners more freedom and helps them develop and improve higher order thinking skills and meta-cognitive strategies. Portfolios provide the students with the opportunity to see themselves not only as readers or writers, but also as individuals with special interests and needs, and provide students with unique opportunities to advance their learning. Portfolios contain the assets like dream power, reflection, variety and individualism, which cannot be found in standardized and norm-based assessments (Irwin-DeVitis, 1996).

On the other hand, Valencia (1990) suggests that, when compared to recent studies of habitual standardized and quantitative assessments, portfolio assessment provides important evidence towards correct and valid assessment of student achievement. Also, according to Calfee and Perfumo (1993), portfolio assessment used in one lesson, improves students' interests towards learning, their motivation and confidence levels, and eventually serves students to be lifelong learners.

Results of many studies have shown that portfolio assessment has positive influence on learning (Gomez, 2000), facilitates authentic assessment of learning (Calfee & Perfumo, 1993), encourages students to do self-reflect and self-evaluate (Herbert & Schultz, 1996) and improves meta-cognitive skills (Hamilton, 1994).

II. Foreign Language Teaching and Portfolio Assessment

Foreign language teaching is one of the areas where portfolio assessment is in use. Gussie and Wright (1999) emphasize a gradual increase in the use of portfolios to assess the students' writing skills in foreign language teaching in the last twenty years. Writers like Chen (1993), Fenwick and Parsons (1999), Singer (1993) and Wolf (1989) have stated that portfolio assessment is effective in foreign language teaching and listed the strengths of this assessment approach as below:

Portfolio assessment,

- helps students to find appropriate learning contexts for themselves during foreign language learning;
- assists the students to identify their goals for their future learning;
- gives them the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning and provides evidence for whether they have reached their goals;
- enables the teacher to identify effective language teaching strategies or reflect on the program carried on in classes;
- provides information about language learning processes of students and facilitates the teacher to individualize the teaching;
- helps students to exhibit their good work;

- takes the form of an instrument to do critical self-analysis; shows control over a foreign language.

When the items given above are analyzed, it can be said that portfolio assessment in foreign language teaching can contribute to the students' taking responsibility towards their own learning, discovering suitable learning strategies and contexts, and identifying goals for their future learning. On the other hand, the opinions of some writers on the benefits of portfolio assessment in foreign language teaching and interpretations of some study findings can be summarized as follows. Enoki (1992) stressed that portfolios are more accurate than standardized tests in assessing students' developments and pointed out that the students' achievement in reading and language arts increased owing to the use of portfolios. Valencia and Place (1994) noted that portfolio assessment had an effect on students' advancement as readers and writers. Both writers emphasized the effects of using portfolio assessment on students' reading, language arts and writing skills in foreign language teaching. The results obtained by researchers studying the effects of portfolio assessment on language acquisition support these opinions. In a study, Shorb (1995) observed that students participated more to writing activities because of portfolio assessment and students' self-evaluations on their writing skills and their study habits improved. In another study, Shober (1996) analyzed the effects of portfolio assessment on students' story writing skills. The results showed that there was 68% improvement in their story writing skills and according to their statements, students improved their understanding abilities as learners, and their writing skills as writers. In his study, Starck (1999) explored the effect of portfolio assessment on students' use of accurate grammar and structure during writing, their general writing skills and their attitudes toward writing. The findings of the study demonstrated that portfolios didn't have a significant influence on students' use of accurate grammar and structure during writing, but there was a significant increase in students' general writing acquisitions and, when student journals were analyzed, there was positive feedback concerning their attitudes toward writing. Similarly, in his study, Spencer (1999) investigated the effects of portfolio assessment on students' writing skills and their attitudes toward writing. The findings showed that portfolio assessment had a strong influence over their writing skills and it had an effect on their attitudes and beliefs toward writing. On the contrary, some studies suggested no influence of portfolio use on the students' writing skills and their attitudes toward writing. For example, in his experimental study of the effectiveness of writing portfolios, Subrick (2003) didn't observe any significant differences between the treatment group, which did process writing and prepared writing portfolios, and the control group, which did only process writing. Liu, (2003), in his study with 7 Asian students in a North American university, asked for the opinions of the students about the portfolios they prepared for their writing skills. The students expressed that they generally didn't see portfolios as teaching and learning tools, which could specifically be used to improve writing skills. On the contrary, Calfee and Perfumo (1993) found that students had developed positive feelings toward language arts; while Koskinen, Valencia and Place (1994) observed that students' attitudes toward reading and language arts developed positively.

Considering the studies done on portfolio assessment, the positive results that were found could be summarized as: positive reactions of both teachers and students toward portfolios; positive attitude development toward learning in classes where portfolios are in use; evidence on portfolios being more successful than traditional tests in assessing student attainments; improvement of students' writing skills and positive changes in students' study habits; increase in students' taking responsibility of their own learning; improvement in students' higher order thinking skills, critical thinking skills, problem solving strategies, and self-evaluation abilities; and evidence towards portfolios role in improving communication among students, teachers, administrators, and parents.

Some researchers have stated that the real effects of portfolio use could only be observed in following time periods, because it has no effects on students' achievement and their attitudes toward the lessons. Additionally, they pointed out that portfolio assessment would take a lot of time (Ediger, 2000; Fenwick & Parsons, 1999; Juniewicz, 2003) and would cost much more than standardized assessment (Ediger, 2000; Gomez, 2000); for the success of portfolio assessment, the teacher and students should have training and adequate time should be allocated for activities (Fenwick & Parsons, 1999).

III. The Purpose and Significance of the Study

The studies about the use of portfolio assessment in foreign language teaching largely show that they do improve writing skills. But, foreign language skills are not limited to writing skills alone. Reading and listening skills are also important. The aim of this study is to find out the effects of portfolio assessment on reading, listening and writing skills of students who enrol in a secondary school language preparatory class and analyze the opinions of those students on portfolio assessment. By courtesy of this study, it might be possible to define the effects of portfolio assessment not only on writing skills, but also on reading and listening skills as well. Also, it might be possible to compare the opinions of students on portfolio assessment in Turkey with those results obtained in other countries. Within this framework, the following two questions will be answered:

- (1) What are the effects of portfolio assessment on the writing, reading and listening skills of the students in secondary school?
- (2) What are the opinions of students regarding portfolio assessment?

IV. Method

1. Participants

This research is an experimental study, where pre-test/post-test control group design was used. The research was implemented in the second semester of an academic year on two randomly selected groups, one treatment group (n=22) and one control group (n=22), among 14 classrooms in an English preparatory class of a state boarding high school for boys in Izmir, a province located in the west of Turkey. Before the implementation, for the equivalence of these two groups (treatment and control), the students' high school entrance grades ($t=.00$, $p<.01$) and first semester English grades ($t=.00$, $p<.01$) were compared and no significant difference was observed between them.

In English lessons of this particular high school (secondary school) preparatory class in Turkey, the improvement of reading, listening, speaking and writing skills is aimed at. There are 27 hours of English in a week; 20 hours are allocated to Main Course and seven hours are allocated to Four Skills. In those Four Skills lessons, one hour is video hour and one hour is reserved for a speaking session with a native speaker whose mother tongue is English. For this reason, there are only five hours left for the Four Skills program. In those five hours of Four Skills lessons, the series of Developing Tactics for Listening (Richards, 1997) and Double Take (Collie, 1997) are used.

2. Procedure

The experimental procedures of the study are summarized as follows:

- (1) Pre-test was given to the treatment group and control group under same conditions before the implementation.
- (2) During the 12-week experimental study, traditional method was used in the control group, whereas portfolio assessment applications were used in the treatment group. None of the methods and materials utilized in the treatment group were ever used in the control group. The researcher himself was the teacher in both groups.
- (3) At the end of the 12-week implementation, the testing instruments were given to the groups again. Besides these, the students in the treatment group were asked to write answers to 6 open-ended questions about their opinions on portfolio assessment.

In literature, there are various approaches about the design and application stages of portfolio assessment. The approaches of Pierce and O'Malley (1992), Moya and O'Malley (1994), Barnhardt, Jennifer K., and Jennifer D., (1998), and Fenwick and Parsons (1999) are some of them. According to Coombe and Barlow (2004), there is no correct way to design the portfolios. Each class or institution has different views about alternative assessment, that's why their portfolios would be different. If used properly together with the reflection component, portfolio assessment could be an ongoing, cooperative, multi-dimensional, and authentic assessment type. In this study, the approaches of those writers mentioned above inspired the researchers of this study to develop a model. According to this model, the stages of the portfolio assessment process are shown in Figure 1.

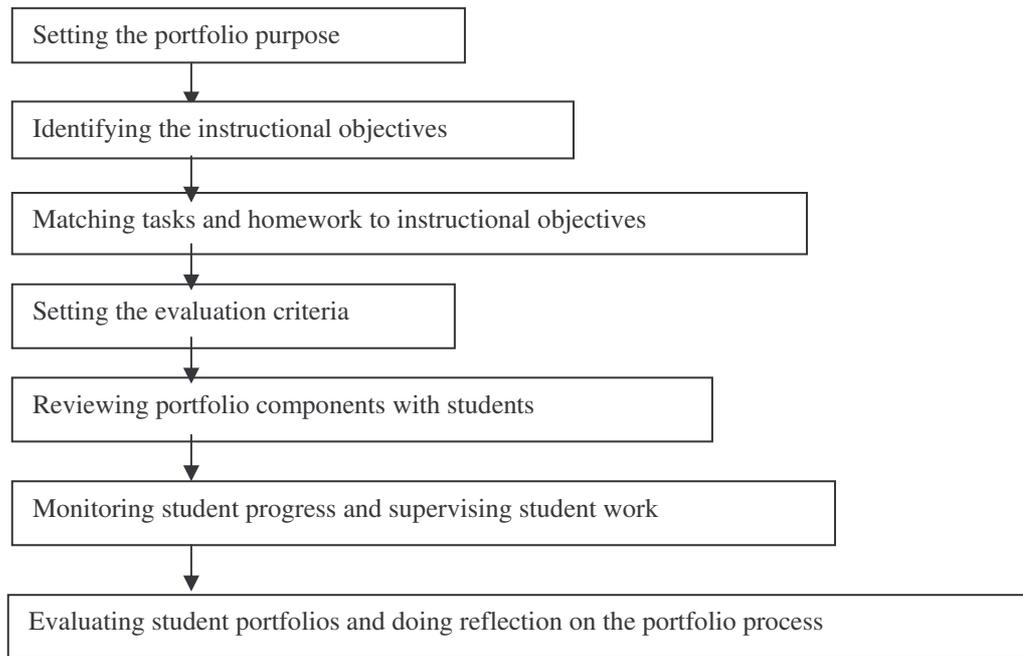


Figure 1. The portfolio assessment process model

For the purpose of the research, the lessons in each group were carried on as planned; two course hours (80 min.) in the treatment group were allocated to portfolio activities. Tasks and homework were assigned to students that matched the defined course objectives and topics in each unit. In the treatment group, the problems of students, the general and individual explanations and reflections of both the teacher and the students, and homework-checks of students were all done in those two hours allocated to portfolio applications.

The experimental treatments were carried on according to the stages as shown in Figure 1 for 12 weeks. In the first session, concepts like portfolio, portfolio components, portfolio tasks and homework, preparation of a portfolio and portfolio assessment were dwelled upon; the purposes of portfolio assessment were discussed and sample examples were demonstrated to the students in the treatment group. In the second session, educational objectives of portfolio assessment were explained and student studies related to those objectives were defined. Since the course was English Four Skills, the students were reminded that their portfolios would be towards developing their skills in English (reading, listening, writing, and speaking) and the students were told that, besides these general goals, each portfolio would also reflect the students' individual goals or objectives. Later, the students were asked to write down the goals for their own portfolios and for this, while writing their objectives of their portfolios, they were informed to take into account difficulties they had in those skills and the things they'd like to improve with the help of this portfolio study. In the third session, issues like the portfolio categories and the selection of learning products that would go into their portfolios, the place to keep the portfolios and evaluation criteria were discussed together with the students and a page of "Portfolio Guide" was prepared and posted on a wall where students could read and refer to it anytime they wanted. In the fourth session, the purpose and preparation of rubrics that are aimed to evaluate learning products were explained and under the supervision of the teacher, the writing rubric that would be used to evaluate the written products of students was prepared together with students. In the fifth session, the students were asked to evaluate their written products and they were asked to explain how they scored their papers and what scores they gave. They were given the opportunity of self-evaluation. In the sixth session, owing to the requests of students, a review was done in class. In this middle session of the 12-week treatment, all issues concerning portfolio assessment and portfolio preparation were overviewed and discussed again.

In the seventh session, the importance of doing reflection was explained and later the students were given reflection samples to examine to see what is included in a reflection paper and what is missing or good in the samples. At the end of the session, a reflection paper, which was prepared by the course teacher, was delivered to the students. In the eighth session, after the discussion on doing reflection and

the sample reflection papers in the previous session, this time students in the treatment group were asked to reflect on their products of that week. Later, those reflections were read out to class and assessed. In the ninth session, the preparation of one of the important components of a portfolio, the “Introductory Letter” was discussed and the students were informed that, for the introductory letter to be expository and organized, answers to the following questions should be included in it:

- (1) What is the portfolio about? What purposes was it prepared for?
- (2) What criteria were taken to organize the products put in the portfolio?
- (3) What is your favourite product? Why?
- (4) What did you like most or didn't like at all when you prepared your portfolio? Write your reasons.
- (5) What challenged you while you prepared your portfolio? Explain with examples.
- (6) To what extent were you able to achieve your goals that you stated at the very beginning of your studies? If not, explain what you think you should do/will do.

After the information on content given above, a sample “Introductory Letter” was given to the students to analyze. In the tenth session, the students went on preparing their portfolios and answers were provided to their questions. In the eleventh and twelfth sessions, every student in the treatment group presented their portfolios to class. During their presentations, they were asked to mention about the following items orally:

- (1) the organization of the portfolio (in what order were the portfolio items organized – according to categories, from the poorest item to the best one or from the least favourite item to the most favourite one)
- (2) short information on the selection of portfolio items
- (3) the item/product liked most
- (4) the most challenging item/product
- (5) achievement of your goals or not
- (6) a general evaluation (general reflection on portfolio studies)

3. Instrumentation

In this study, a reading test, a listening test and a writing essay test was used to obtain data. Also, six open-ended items were used to get the students' opinions on portfolio assessment. The objectives stated in the curriculum of English course were taken as basis to form up the reading and listening test and the writing essay test (see Appendix A for sample objectives). Developing Tactics for Listening (Richards, 1997), Double Take (Collie, 1997), and Click on (Evans & O'Sullivan, 2002) and Language in Use (Doff & Jones, 2002) as auxiliary textbooks were utilized to develop the reading and listening multiple-choice exam. 30 items were prepared for the listening part and 97 items were written for the reading part. There were 127 multiple-choice questions in the trial exam. In January 2005, that trial exam was tested on 140 students, who successfully finished the preparatory class in the previous year. The listening part was tested in one session and the reading part was given to the same students in another session.

Considering the lesson objectives, item difficulties, and discrimination indexes, 15 items were selected among 30 items for the listening part. The difficulty indexes (p_j) of those selected items for the listening part ranges from .51 to .85; whereas their discrimination indexes (r_{jx}) range from .31 to .52. The KR-20 internal consistency coefficient of this part is .81. Similarly, considering the lesson objectives, item difficulties, and discrimination indexes, 25 items were selected among 97 items for the reading part. The difficulty indexes (p_j) of those selected items for the reading part ranges from .52 to .97; whereas their discrimination indexes (r_{jx}) range from .31 to .83. The KR-20 internal consistency coefficient of this part is .92.

The writing essay exam, which was aimed to test the students' writing skills, was developed by using final writing questions asked in previous years and by considering the course objectives. The essays of students were evaluated with the help of a rubric (see Appendix B). The reliability of the rubric was

calculated by examining the consistency between the raters. For this reason, in another group, a writing exam with the same purposes was given to 30 students and their papers were graded by two raters. The inter-rater reliability coefficient was found as .96.

On the other hand, the six questions that asked for the treatment group students' opinions on portfolio assessment were formed by taking the goals of this study into account and by examining the studies of such writers as Anselmo (1998), Rolheiser, Bower and Stevahn (2000), and Liu (2003).

V. Results

In this study, answers for two basic questions were sought after: (a) what are the effects of portfolio assessment on the writing, reading and listening skills of the students in secondary school? (b) what are the opinions of students regarding portfolio assessment?

Pre-test/post-test control group design was implemented to find the answers for the questions. Pre-test/post-test designs are widely used in behavioural research, primarily for the purpose of comparing groups and/or measuring change resulting from experimental treatments (Dimitrov & Rumrill, 2003). The listening and reading test and the writing essay exam were given before and after the experimental treatment to both treatment group and control group. ANOVA for repeated measures, which provides comparisons taking dependence conditions, was used to find answers for the first question of this study. For the analysis of the second question of this study, the answers given by the treatment group students regarding the portfolio assessment were examined by sorting them into factors with the help of content analysis. The results obtained and their explanations are given below.

1. Reading

In order to find the effect of portfolio assessment on students' reading comprehension, the pre-test and post-test scores of students in both control group and treatment group were compared with ANOVA for repeated measures. In the treatment group, the mean and standard error measures were $M=22.55$, $SE=.48$ for the pre-test and $M=23.96$, $SE=.27$ for the pos-test; whereas in the control group, the mean and standard error measures were $M=21.68$, $SE=.48$ for the pre-test and $M=23.77$, $SE=.27$ for the post-test. A medium level significant difference, $F(1,42)=27.59$, $MSE=67.38$, $p<.01$, $\eta=.40$ was found between the reading pre-test and post-test scores of treatment group, where portfolio assessment was implemented and control group, where portfolio assessment was not implemented. On the other hand, the between-subject factor between the reading comprehension pre-test and post-test scores of treatment group and control group was not found significant, $F(1,42)=1.05$, $MSE=2.56$, $p>.05$. Even though these results show a similar increase in time for both treatment group and control group reading comprehension skills, the insignificant between-subject interaction suggested that portfolio assessment had no important effect on reading comprehension skills.

2. Listening

In order to find the effect of portfolio assessment on students' listening skills, the pre-test and post-test scores of students in both control group and treatment group were compared with ANOVA for repeated measures. In the treatment group, the mean and standard error measures were $M=10.82$, $SE=.36$ for the pre-test and $M=11.82$, $SE=.40$ for the pos-test; whereas in the control group, the mean and standard error measures were $M=10.82$, $SE=.36$ for the pre-test and $M=11.50$, $SE=.40$ for the post-test. A low level significant difference, $F(1,42)=6.26$, $MSE=15.56$, $p<.05$, $\eta=.13$ was found between the listening pre-test and post-test scores of treatment group, where portfolio assessment was implemented and control group, where portfolio assessment was not implemented. On the other hand, the between-subject factor between the listening pre-test and post-test scores of treatment group and control group was not found significant, $F(1,42)=.22$, $MSE=.56$, $p>.05$. As it was in the reading comprehension, even though these results show a similar increase in time for both treatment group and control group listening skills, the insignificant between-subject interaction suggested that portfolio assessment had no important effect on listening skills.

3. Writing

In order to find the effect of portfolio assessment on students' writing skills, the pre-test and post-test scores of students in both control group and treatment group were compared with ANOVA for repeated measures. It was found that there was a high level significant difference in time (pre-test and post-test) between treatment group and control group, $F(1,42)=245.45$, $MSE=240.57$, $p<.01$, $\eta=.85$. The between-subject interaction calculated to find out the experimental variable was found medium level significant, $F(1,42)=26.16$, $MSE=25.64$, $p<.01$, $\eta=.38$. This result suggests that the experimental variable (portfolio assessment) had an effect on writing skills. In other words, the pre-test and post-test average scores of both treatment group and control group changed in time. In the treatment group, the mean and standard error measures were $M=3.11$, $SE=.20$ for the pre-test and $M=7.57$, $SE=.32$ for the post-test; whereas in the control group, the mean and standard error measures were $M=3.18$, $SE=.20$ for the pre-test and $M=5.34$, $SE=.32$ for the post-test. When the averages are examined, it can be seen that the change in the treatment group was much higher.

4. Students' Opinions on Portfolio Assessment

This section of the study was important for it describes the opinions of those students, who enrol in a state boarding high school (secondary school level) for boys preparatory class in Turkey, on portfolio assessment. For this purpose, 6 questions were asked to students in the treatment group at the end of the treatment. 21 out of 22 students in the treatment group answered the questions; one student couldn't participate because he was sick. The written answers of the students were examined through content analysis. The results are given below, accompanied with sample statements of students.

a. Which part of your portfolio did you like most? Why?

When the answers of those 21 students in the treatment group were analyzed, it was found that 33% of them ($n=7$) liked the reflection part, introductory part and the writing tasks themselves most. 23% ($n=5$) stated that they liked the reading part most and they added that they enjoyed preparing the reading part of their portfolios, because they thought it was quite helpful to them. 19% ($n=4$) of the students liked the speaking part most, because it helped to discover their spoken mistakes and improve their pronunciations. Another 14% ($n=3$) stressed that portfolio tasks urged them to do research and those tasks helped them so evaluate themselves. Only 9% ($n=2$) of the students specified the listening part as their most favourable part.

Ali

The best two parts of this study were that we could choose the items we wanted and writing the introductory and final sections. It is a wonderful feeling to evaluate the products after some hard effort spent on them. That's why I liked the writing part most.

b. What challenged you during the portfolio study?

29% ($n=6$) of the students stated that portfolio preparation required intensive study in a limited time; 24% ($n=5$) found the speaking tasks challenging; 19% ($n=4$) found the self-evaluation of portfolio products difficult; 14% ($n=3$) found the task reviewing and task re-editing hard; and the rest of treatment group, 14% (3) of the students said portfolio study was difficult, because it was a first time experience for them.

Ufuk

What challenged me most was finding myself studying much more and doing a research. Rewriting homework for the lack of diligence I had shown, because I had to write it in a short time was difficult for me. Repeating homework is not nice.

c. Did the portfolio study help you take more responsibility during the English learning process?

48% (n=10) of the students said that their responsibilities increased because they needed to work harder to show their best and they felt the need to work harder on topics which they were poor at. 33% (n=7) of them put forth that striving to do the best motivated them and inspired them to learn more. Only 2 students (9.5%) stated that they noticed they were learning now.

Ali

With the help of this portfolio study, we became aware of the homework we did before for the sake of doing it and the meaningless results of the exams and this gave us more responsibility and urged us to give more attention to our homework and showed us the necessity of planning before doing.

d. How is portfolio assessment different from other traditional assessments (e.g. tests and exams)?

67% (n=14) of the students presented that portfolio assessment was a more realistic approach, because unlike the momentary tests, it was based on studies done in a whole semester. Seven students (33%) stressed that carelessness, excitement and fear could have an influence on test scores and they added that this was not true for portfolio assessment.

Ali

The difference between portfolio and traditional assessments is like the temperature difference between Russia and Saudi Arabia. Portfolio studies help me to show my real achievement, which the exams can't and boosts my self-confidence.

Emrah

The scores I got from the tests didn't show my improvement much. I, especially, didn't know the topics I was poor at. But, portfolio study is an example to show how well we improved. Because, they are not as momentary as the exams; it is an assessment of a whole semester.

e. Do you think your grades will be fair now?

71.4% (n=15) of the students wrote that the assessment based on portfolios would be fair, and attributed this to their studies they did the whole semester and to their products with which they could present their best work. 14% (n=3) of the students asserted that (portfolio assessment) is flexible compared to traditional assessments and their studies would not be in vain whereas 2 students (9.5%) stated that injustice would be minimum.

Hakan

We got several grades because of our studies and efforts. They are our real improvements and achievements. Our grades will be fair for sure with this type of assessment.

f. Do you have any ideas or suggestions that will help us in the future?

48% (n=10) of the students suggested that much more time should be allocated for portfolio studies; 33.3% (n=7) said it would be appropriate to include wide range of more products into the portfolios and those products should be more about the skills that need improvement; three students (14%) implied the necessity of teacher help and explanations when the portfolio objectives were determined and related tasks and homework were assigned for each individual.

Anil

While preparing my portfolio, I spent the time I reserved for my exams. If good results are expected out of these portfolio studies, there shouldn't be any exams, or at least the portfolio study should cover the whole year, not only one semester.

VI. Discussion

The first aim of this study was to examine the effects of portfolio assessment on the reading writing and listening skills of high school preparatory class students. The comparisons made showed that the reading and listening skills of those students in the treatment group where portfolio assessment was implemented did not differ significantly ($p > .05$) from those of students in the control group. In other words, portfolio assessment activities didn't have an effect on the reading and listening skills of students who enrolled in a high school English preparatory class. But, an important ($p < .01$) effect of portfolio assessment on writing skills was observed. While, the results of this research support the opinions of some writers, they are in contradiction with the ideas of some other researchers. Enoki (1992) stated that, owing to the use of portfolios, achievements of students increased in reading and language arts. The results of our study showed no effect of portfolio assessment on reading skills, but revealed that the effects were more on writing skills. If we think writing skills as a part of language arts, the results of our study in a way supports Enoki's opinion stating that the use of portfolios increases student achievement in language arts. In their study, Valencia and Place (1994) highlighted the possibility of observing students developing as readers and writers with the help of portfolios. The results for writing in our study go in hand-in-hand with Valencia and Place's vision of portfolios as instruments to observe changes in students' development as writers. The results for writing in our study parallel the study results of Sorb (1995), which states that with the help portfolios students, participate more to writing activities. Similarly, the results for writing in our study parallel the results of Shober (1996) which states that portfolio assessment has effects on story writing skills and the results of Spencer (1999) and Starck (1999) which show strong influence of portfolio assessment on general writing skills. On the other hand, no study examining the effects of portfolio assessment on listening skills has been found in related literature. This study is different from other studies, because it does not only examine the effects of portfolio assessment on writing skills, but also on reading and listening skills as well. But this study shows no effect of portfolio assessment on reading and listening skills.

The second aim of the study was to examine the students' views on portfolio assessment. For this purpose, the answers of students to 6 open-ended questions were analyzed. According to the analysis results, the opinions of students on portfolio assessment are: it is a fair method (71.4%); it is a more realistic approach compared to traditional testing applications (67%); it increases responsibility because of a need to do the best and to show improvement (48%); it motivates and arouses learning desire (33%); and the students liked the writing part most (33%). The negative opinions, on the other hand, are: there is not enough time to do the best work (48%); wider range of more products should be included in portfolios (33%); students had difficulty in reading part of portfolio (24%) and in doing self-evaluation (19%); it is difficult to review and correct the tasks and homework (14%); and it is difficult, because it is a first time experience for the students (14%). Finally, few students (9.5%) expressed that portfolio assessment would be a little unfair.

Many researchers (Alabdelwahab, 2002; Hall & Hewitt-Gervais, 1999; Spencer, 1999; Tiwari, 2003; Slater, Ryan & Samson, 1997; Liu, 2003; Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2002; Calfee & Perfumo, 1993) have stated that portfolio assessment increases motivation for learning, feeling of confidence, self-respect, and responsibility towards learning and it is a much fairer approach compared to traditional assessment applications. The positive results obtained in this study agree with the results of those researchers. On the other hand, Juniewicz (2003), Ediger (2000), Fenwick and Parsons (1999), and Bushman and Schnitker (1995) expressed their concerns over the fact that portfolio assessment could lead to some difficulties because it is a new assessment type and more time is required to get the best out of it. Some of the results of this study that represent the difficulties in portfolio assessment in a way support these concerns.

As a result, this study examined the effects of portfolio assessment – which included primarily reading, listening and writing activities – on reading, writing and listening skills of high school prep class students. The studies on portfolio assessment generally have examined its influence on writing skills. This study can be regarded important because it examines the effect of portfolio assessment not only on writing skills, but also on reading and listening skills as well. Many other research results support the results about writing skills obtained in the present study. Also, even though some other studies report the effects of portfolio assessment on students' reading habits and the positive changes in the students' perceptions of themselves as readers, in this particular study, where portfolio assessment was handled a bit differently, its effects on reading and listening skills were not detected.

VII. Limitations and Considerations for Future Research

There were several limitations in this research investigation and the results obtained should be evaluated within these limitations. These limitations may be taken into account in future studies on the effect of portfolio assessment on foreign language skills. The effects of portfolio assessment on retention of reading, listening and writing skills could have been examined. By this way, the effect of portfolio assessment on these skills could have been analyzed on the long run. But, since the students had their 2,5-month summer holiday right after the completion of the treatment, the students' retention levels couldn't be looked over. On the other hand, since this study was administered on a state boarding school for boys, the effects of portfolio assessment on gender were not analyzed. Also, this study was limited to the effects of portfolio assessment on reading, listening and speaking skills, hence the effects on speaking skills were not examined. Another limitation of this study was that the reading and listening skills were evaluated with tests. The skills mentioned could have been evaluated with other methods too. Considering these limitations would benefit the future studies on this topic.

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Appendix A: Sample Objectives

The course objectives aimed and studied in the lessons and covered in the achievement tests (the listening and the reading) and the writing exam are as follows:

Listening

- The students will identify the names, surnames, nationalities, jobs, ages, etc. of those people in a listening text
- The students will do the listening exercises like question-answer, true-false, multiple-choice, etc.

Reading

- The students will find the words and structures in a reading text.
- The students will comprehend a text in detail.
- The students will show comprehension of a reading text by doing activities like completing tables, filling in blanks, map completion and correcting wrong information.
- The students will do exercises like question-answer, true-false, multiple-choice about a reading text.
- The students will comprehend the simple titles and topics in written publications.

Writing

- The students will write about topics suitable to their levels and their interests.
- The students will communicate in written language by using basic sentence structures.
- The students will write about past events and future plans.
- The students will have written information exchange with other people.
- The students will write a letter, a story, or a poem by using correct structures and words.

Appendix B: Writing Rubric

WRITING RUBRIC				
Student Name:				Total Score:
Date:				Signature of Rater:
Rating	Punctuation and capitalization	Grammar and Spelling	Content	Vocabulary Choice
4	No punctuation and capitalization errors	No spelling errors. Sentences with no grammatical errors	Organization appropriate to writing assignment. Transitions between ideas are smooth	Vocabulary is precise, varied and vivid
3	Few errors in using capital letters at the beginning of sentences and proper names. Few negligible punctuation errors	Few grammatical errors like subject verb agreement, plural-singular agreement. Few spelling errors	Events are organized logically, but some parts of the sample may not be fully developed. Some transition of ideas is evident	Vocabulary is adequate for grade level
2	Some punctuation and capitalization errors	Some incomplete sentences. Some spelling errors	There may be evidence of disorganization. There are few transitional markers or repetitive transitional markers	Vocabulary is simple
1	Many punctuation and capitalization errors that disrupt communication	Many incomplete sentences with grammatical errors. Full of spelling errors	Sample is comprised of only a few disjointed sentences. No transitional markers	Vocabulary is limited and repetitious