

THE EFFECT OF WRITING PORTFOLIOS ON THE WRITING SKILLS OF THE TENTH
GRADE TURKISH EFL STUDENTS AT A STATE SCHOOL

Thesis submitted to the
Institute of Educational Sciences
for the Degree of

Master of Arts
in
English Language Teaching

by
Huriye Arzu Öztürk

Yeditepe University
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T.C.
YEDİTEPE UNİVERSİTESİ
EĞİTİM BİLİMLERİ ENSTİTÜSÜ

KONU: THE EFFECT OF WRITING PORTFOLIOS ON THE WRITING SKILLS OF
THE TENTH GRADE TURKISH EFL STUDENTS AT A STATE SCHOOL

ONAY:

Yrd. Doç. Dr. Yeşim Özek

(Danışman)



Yrd. Doç. Dr. Zeynep Banu Koçoğlu



Yrd. Doç. Dr. Sibel Tatar



TESLİM EDEN: Huriye Arzu Öztürk
TEZ SAVUNMA TARİHİ: 22.02.2010
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ABSTRACT

The present study aims to investigate the effect of writing portfolios on the writing skills of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students at a state school both quantitatively and qualitatively. The study was conducted with twenty participants in a process oriented writing class. In this study, four questions were investigated:

- 1) What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' interest in and awareness of writing in English?
- 2) What is the effect of writing portfolios on the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?
- 3) Is there a relationship between the four different measures of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?
- 4) What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills?

In the investigation of the above-mentioned questions, a multi-method approach was used. The first research question was examined by means of Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire. Writing portfolio was used as an intervention strategy for the investigation of the second question. Before and after the use of portfolio, the participants' proficiency scores, writing scores and the number of words and MTUL (mean T-unit length) of their compositions were measured. The effect of writing portfolios on the participants' writing skills was assessed based on the difference between these pre and post scores by paired samples T-test. The fourth research question was investigated by reflection letters and focus group interview. The reflection letters and focus group interview also provided data for the qualitative investigation of the first and second research questions.

Writing portfolio was proved to be significantly effective in improving the writing skills

of the participants. In addition to this quantitative result, the participants reported that writing portfolio helped them to improve their writing skills such as language use, vocabulary, conjunctions and organizing ideas.

Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire demonstrated that most of the participants had low enjoyment of and self-confidence in writing compositions in English although most of them were aware of the help of writing in learning. Most of the participants had a low awareness of receiving peer feedback about their compositions and did not find it useful either. Likewise, most of them had a low awareness of doing writing homework at home. Similarly, most of them had a low awareness of receiving teacher feedback about their compositions; however, 50 % of them had a high awareness of the usefulness of teacher feedback. And 47 % of the participants had a high awareness of drafting and revising their compositions. In addition, none of the participants had experienced process writing and writing portfolio before the study.

The study also demonstrated that there was a statistically significant and large relationship between the four different measures of the participants' writing skills both before and after the study.

Writing portfolio helped the participants to increase their awareness of EFL writing. Most of the participants reported positive opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills?

Key Terminology: Writing Portfolio, Writing Skills

ÖZET

Huriye Arzu Öztürk

Bu çalışma, Yazım Dosyası tekniğinin İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen lise II. sınıf Türk öğrencilerin yazma becerileri üzerindeki etkisini niceliksel ve niteliksel olarak araştırmayı amaçlar. Çalışma bir devlet okulunda süreç odaklı yazma dersinde yirmi öğrenci ile yürütüldü. Bu çalışmada dört sorunun cevabı araştırıldı:

1. İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen lise II. sınıf Türk öğrencilerin, İngilizce yazı yazma ilgisi ve farkındalığı nedir?
2. Yazım dosyasının, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen lise II. sınıf Türk öğrencilerin yazma becerileri üzerindeki etkisi nedir?
3. İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen lise II. sınıf Türk öğrencilerin yazma becerilerinin dört farklı ölçümü arasında bir ilişki var mı?
4. İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen lise II. sınıf Türk öğrencilerin, yazma becerilerini geliştirmek için yazım dosyası kullanımına dair görüşleri nelerdir?

Yukarda bahsedilen soruları araştırmak için çoklu metod kullanıldı. Araştırmanın ilk sorusu, Yazma ilgisi ve Farkındalık'ı Anketi ile cevaplandı. Araştırmanın ikinci sorusunu cevaplamak için, Yazım dosyası bir müdahale yöntemi olarak kullanıldı. Yazım dosyası öncesi ve sonrası, katılımcıların İngilizce yeterliliği, kompozisyon puanları, kullandıkları kelime sayısı ve kompozisyonlarının ortalama sonlandırılabilir birim uzunluğu ölçüldü ve yazım dosyasının, katılımcıların yazma becerileri üzerindeki etkisi bu ölçümlerin ortalamaları arasındaki farkın istatistiksel olarak değerlendirilmesiyle ortaya kondu. Çalışmanın dördüncü sorusu, katılımcıların yazdığı düşünce yansıtma mektupları ve odak grup mülakatı yöntemiyle araştırıldı. Düşünce yansıtma mektupları ve odak grup mülakatı araştırmanın birinci ve ikinci sorusunun niteliksel olarak incelenmesi için de kullanıldı.

Bu çalışma Yazım dosyasının, yazma becerilerini geliřtirmedeki manidar etkinliđini istatistiksel olarak gsterdi. Bu niceliksel sonuca ek olarak, katılımcılar da yazım dosyasının dili kullanma, kelime bilgisi, bađlaç bilgisi ve fikirleri organize etme gibi yazma becerilerini geliřtirmelerine yardımcı olduđunu belirtti.

Yazma İlgisi ve Farkındalık'ı Anketi, katılımcıların çođunun İngilizce kompozisyon yazma ilgisinin ve özgüveninin düşük olduđunu gsterdi. Ayrıca, katılımcıların çođunun evde İngilizce yazma ödevi yapma farkındalıđının düşük olduđu görld. Benzer şekilde, katılımcıların çođunun arkadaşlarından ve öğretmenlerinden, kompozisyonları hakkında geribildirim alma farkındalıđı da düşükt. Katılımcıların çođu arkadaşlarından geribildirim almayı faydalı bulmazken, % 50'si öğretmen geribildiriminin faydasına dair yüksek bir farkındalıđa sahipti. Ayrıca, katılımcıların % 47'sinin kompozisyonlarını gözden geçirme ve yeniden yazma farkındalıđının yüksek olduđu görld. Katılımcıların hiçbirisi yabancı bir dilde süreç yazma ve yazım dosyası tecrübesine sahip deđildi.

Bu çalışma, katılımcıların yazma becerilerinin dört farklı ölçümü arasında hem çalışmanın başında ve hem de sonunda istatistiksel olarak anlamlı ve güçlü bir ilişkinin olduđunu gsterdi.

Yazım dosyası, katılımcıların İngilizce yazı yazma farkındalıđını artırmalarını sağladı. Katılımcıların çođu yazım dosyası tekniđinin, İngilizce yazı yazma becerilerini geliřtirmek için kullanılmasına dair pozitif görüşler bildirdi.

Anahtar Kelime: Yazım Dosyası, İngilizce Yazı Yazma Becerileri

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Writing is an important skill for both first and second language and it is not a skill which is naturally learned like walking (Lenneberg, 1967 cited in Brown, 2001). Writing is a skill which must be deliberately taught and requires practice to be developed as it is stated by Kroll (2001:p.219) “writers must write to improve”. When the context is a foreign language one as it is in Turkey, writing becomes more important because writing helps students learn the target language and provide them with opportunities to practise it.

If teachers want to support writing as a skill in a foreign language, they should go beyond writing for learning and encourage their students to write for writing as it is stated by Harmer (2007). When students are asked to write a narrative essay, they are expected to write for the purpose of writing rather than the purpose of learning the language. In this assignment, their ability to write a narrative matters, not whether they can use the past tense correctly or not.

Moreover, writing is a productive skill which requires students to come up with a written text in the target language. Students need to consolidate their existing language knowledge and to improve it and even read more in order to construct and convey meaning in the target language. The importance of reading as a central process in writing is also emphasized in the Hayes Model of Writing Theory (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). It is obvious that such a writing process can also help students to reach a proficiency level, at which they can use a foreign language for communicative purposes since writing is written interaction, that is, the written way of communication.

Furthermore, the importance given to writing has increased as the features of communicative language teaching have been dominating in both second and foreign language context (Weigle, 2002). Writing has been gradually recognized as a process of thinking and

composing as a result of communicative language teaching. Writing has been regarded as an important “enterprise in and of itself in contrary to the traditional view which considers that writing functions to support and consolidate oral language use, grammar and vocabulary” (Weigle, 2002:p.5).

Calfee and Perfumo (1996) discuss the history of writing assessment in detail. It is stressed that assessment of writing by multiple-choice tests limited the instruction to grammar points and error correction and did not promote higher-order thinking skills of students. The projects which were developed as a reaction to this in the USA in 1972 and 1974 emphasized the process approach to writing instruction based on the research of the time. It was also promoted by the projects that writing had to be assessed directly rather than through multiple-choice tests, which resulted in the popularization of holistic scoring of writing.

However, it was later realized that assessment of writing by timed, impromptu, single sample writings of students did not enable students to display their thorough performance. It was against the nature of writing as well since it was understood that writing was a cyclical process. In addition, students’ achievement in writing at the three level of education (elementary, middle and tertiary) was found unsatisfactory at that time.

In 1980s, the term alternative assessment appeared under different names such as authentic assessment, performance assessment and portfolios (Calfee and Perfumo, 1996). The main purpose was to match instruction with assessment. Portfolios allow the collection of students’ writing samples under relatively normal conditions in comparison to the direct assessment of writing, and instruction and assessment can be combined (Murphy, in press). Portfolio assessment emphasizes the instruction of writing as a process rather than a product.

Moreover, portfolios allow students to have more time and instructional support for the production of writing. Portfolios provide students with opportunities to practice actual writing

more for meaningful purposes. Peer and teacher feedback, reflection and self-assessment lead students to true and meaningful learning.

Furthermore, “portfolios give a better picture of students’ writing abilities. They tend to promote a richer and more sophisticated understanding of writing. And they reinforce continuous effort and improvement” Elbow (1991, p. xi).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The inspiration to conduct this study resulted from the researcher’s personal observations about the writing skills of the students at some state secondary schools. Students’ unwillingness and inability to write in English caused the researcher to investigate the issue. Large class sizes, which range between 40 to 55 students, and inadequate class hours, which is four hours a week, are considered as reasons for not being able practise writing as a skill sufficiently at some state schools.

Therefore, the students at some state schools are not accustomed to writing in English, so they have insufficient writing abilities, which do not go beyond writing a few sentences about themselves. Nearly most of them are not able to produce meaningful and organized writings in their own words and are not familiar with text types in the target language. In addition, they know neither how to evaluate nor how to improve their writings.

Most of the tenth grade students who were enrolled in the language class at the beginning of the education year of 2008-2009 had the same problems. Writing portfolio as an instructional tool might help these students to improve their writing skills enabling them to practise writing as a skill more.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

The present study aims to investigate the effect of writing portfolios on the writing skills of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students at a state school both quantitatively and qualitatively.

1.4 Research Questions

To reach the above-mentioned purpose of the study, the questions below were investigated:

- 1) What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' interest in and awareness of writing in English?
- 2) What is the effect of writing portfolios on the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?
- 3) Is there a relationship between the four different measures of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?
- 4) What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills?

1.5 Significance of the Study

The present study seems to be the first action research study which attempts to contribute to the literature investigating the effect of writing portfolios on the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills at a state school both quantitatively and qualitatively. There is no writing portfolio study conducted with the tenth grade state secondary school students in Turkey.

At the national level, there are a limited number of portfolio studies, only two of which investigate writing portfolios as a tool to develop and assess writing skills. One of these writing portfolio studies was conducted with preparatory class university students and the other one is an action research study conducted with the seventh grade students at a state primary school. Most of the other portfolio and writing portfolio studies were conducted with preparatory class students and they have a wide range of purposes such as overall proficiency development, reducing writing anxiety and increasing self-confidence in writing in English through writing portfolios.

The present study also contributes to the literature measuring the writing interest and awareness of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students at a state school and their opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills. It seems that the Turkish EFL students' interest in and awareness of writing and their opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios have not been investigated at state secondary schools before the present study.

In addition, the study seems to be unique in terms of its methodology because it uses four different measures of writing assessment; standardized (proficiency score), direct (timed writing tasks) and atomistic measurement of writing (number of words and MTUL) and investigates the correlations between these four different measures of writing skills.

1.6 Definition of Terms

English as a foreign language (EFL) is taught in the countries where English is not the medium of instruction for other school subjects and is not used for daily communication. English is a foreign language in Turkey because it is not used as a medium of wide communication (Savignon, 2001).

First language (L1) means the mother tongue of a person. In other words, it is the language in which a person thinks and makes his daily communication feeling very comfortable and natural (Savignon, 2001).

T-unit means terminable unit consisting of a subject and a predicate (Hunt, 1965). Subordinate clauses, phrases or modifiers can be found attached to or embedded within a T-unit (Isaacson, 1988). T-unit length (MTUL) means the number of words per T-unit. Mean T-unit length can be calculated by dividing the number of words in a text by the number of T-units in the same text (Hunt, 1965).

1.7 Basic Assumptions

It was assumed that all the participants gave sincere responses to the questions in the questionnaire, reflection letters and at the focus group interview.

1.8 Organization of the Study

This part is a general description of the organization of the thesis which consists of five chapters. Chapter I discusses the statement of the problem, the background and purpose of the study and the relevant research questions. Chapter I also includes the definition of terms and an overview of methodology. Chapter II provides a review of literature, which guided the study, including the nature, instruction and assessment of writing, and portfolios. The types of portfolios and portfolio studies as an assessment, self-assessment and instructional tool, the benefits and challenges of portfolios are also discussed in Chapter II. Chapter III discusses the methodology of the study; the research design, the procedures of data collection and analysis. Setting and participants are also mentioned in this chapter. Chapter IV includes the analysis of the data under the light of the literature presented in Chapter II. Chapter V discusses the conclusion, implications and limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further studies. References and appendices are also included in the thesis.

1.9 Overview of Methodology

The study is an action research study; the research questions resulted from “the teacher’s own immediate concerns and problems” as it is stated by Crookes in the definition of action research (1993:p.130, cited in Mackey & Gass, 2005). Wallace (1998) regards action research as a type of examination, “which mostly serves to the improvement of teacher and learner rather than theory building, although it can be used for the latter” (p.4, cited in Mackey & Gass, 2005).

The present study has a quasi-experimental research design because it uses multiple measures of students’ writing skills. This research design was used to investigate the second

research question entitled as “What is the effect of writing portfolios on the writing skills of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students?” and portfolio was used as an intervention strategy. The means of the participants’ pre and post writing scores were compared by paired samples T-test. Pearson Product-Moment correlation was computed by SPSS (11.5) to investigate the third research question worded as ‘Is there a relationship between the four different measures of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students’ writing skills?’

Qualitative data about the effect of writing portfolios on the tenth grade Turkish EFL students’ writing skills were gathered through guided reflection letters about essay and writing portfolio, and focus group interview. The reflection letter about essay consisted of open-ended questions prepared by the researcher in order to help the participants reflect on the process they went through while writing each essay.

The questionnaire of Writing Interest and Awareness was used to investigate the first research question worded as ‘What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students’ interest in and awareness of writing in English?’. In addition to this, some questions in the focus group interview were designed and used to have an in-depth understanding about the participants’ awareness of EFL writing.

The fourth research question entitled as ‘What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students’ opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills?’ was examined by means of reflection letter about writing portfolio and focus group interview. The reflection letter about writing portfolio consisted of open-ended questions in order to help the participants to reflect on their writing portfolios and the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Nature of Writing

The principles of testing require an ability to be well defined before it is assessed. When the ability in question is writing, it is not an easy task since writing is a complex skill. People use writing for different purposes in different contexts ranging from filling in an application form to persuasive essay as it is stated by Purves (1992), Camp (1993), White (1995). The general model of writing discourse was first described by Vähäpääsi (1982) for an international study of school writing. His model classifies text types along two dimensions; “one is cognitive processing and the other is dominant intention or purpose” (cited in Weigle, 2002: p.10). According to this dominant purpose, writing is classified by Vähäpääsi (1982) into six types as writing to learn, to convey emotions, to inform, to convince, to entertain and to keep in touch.

On the other hand, three purposes of writing are described and used by National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1987) in the national assessments of written composition. These are “informative writing, expressive / narrative writing and persuasive writing” (cited in O’Malley & Valdez-Pierce, 1996:p.137). The purpose of writing determines not only the nature of writing but also the genre which suits the specific purpose. The genre determines the style and language to be used by the writer and the structure of the composition. Essays, stories, biographies, journal entries, letters, newspaper reports, learning logs can be given as examples of different genres or types of writing.

Theory of writing examines the matter from a different perspective and states that “the question what constitutes writing cannot be answered without taking into consideration the larger issues resulting from literacy skills development and literacy demands in various contexts” (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996:p.2). Reading and writing are connected and complement

each other as the comprehension and production processes, which are described by the term literacy. The types of writing are classified by Grabe and Kaplan in two ways:

First, depending on the context, task and audience; writing to identify, to communicate, to call to action, to remember, to satisfy requirements, to introspect, to create an aesthetic form, or to create by reorganizing existing information. Second, writing with composing and writing without composing. When somebody writes a shopping list or fills in a questionnaire, composing, that is, to combine individual sentences in order to form a more or less unique, cohesive and coherent larger structure is not needed (Grabe and Kaplan 1996: 4).

If the aim of language teaching and learning is to improve writing as a skill, writing with composing must be emphasized in the instruction of writing as it is stressed by Harmer (2007).

2.2 Instruction of Writing

Writing helps students to learn a language. The help of writing in learning a language is explained by Raimes (1983) in three ways: First, while students are writing, they have the opportunity to reinforce the grammatical structures, vocabulary and idioms which they have already learned. Second, students can learn more within the language and take risks to construct and convey the meaning they intend to communicate while they are writing. Third, students have to put intensive mental effort into writing in order that they become very engaged with the new language which enhances learning.

Writing is frequently used in EFL classrooms for two purposes- writing for learning and writing for writing (Harmer, 2007). Filling in the blanks with the recently learned words just helps students to recall and use these words in the exam. However, this use of writing for learning is not the aim of language teaching and learning. EFL students must aim to learn this language for communicative purposes. This communication is sometimes spoken and sometimes written. In EFL context, written communication seems to provide students with

more opportunities to practise the language. It is also believed by Grabe and Kaplan (1996:p.266) that “writing is first and foremost a communicative activity.”

It is obvious that writing for writing, not writing for learning, encourage EFL students to learn the language in order to construct and convey meaning more when communication-spoken or written- becomes the need. As it is stated by an anonymous college student:

True learning cannot be defined by an opscan sheet or by memorization. The only real way to learn, I believe, is through experience. Classroom lectures and information lay the groundwork for learning, but it all comes down to whether or not you can do what you've supposedly learned (Mills-Courts & Amiran, 1991:p.101).

Then, nobody can claim that writing can be learnt without writing, without practice. It is stressed by Grabe and Kaplan that “writing should be practised in the classroom every day, even the beginning writers at elementary school in ESL or EFL context should write every day. Some writing tasks can be brief; others may be a springboard for more complex writing purposes” (1996:p.270).

Moreover, the pedagogy of language advocates meaningful writing which requires students to be involved in the topics they consider interesting and significant. Then, it may not be wrong to regard writing for writing or writing with composing as the best way to help EFL students to learn and use the target language.

The compositional nature of writing, which includes thinking, drafting/composing, revising and editing procedures, affected the approaches to the instruction of writing. The process approach versus the product approach to writing, which appeared in the literature of language teaching in 1960s for the first time, has been considered superior to product approach by many educators and more helpful to EFL learners. Harmer states that:

Spending time with learners on pre-writing phases, editing, re-drafting and finally producing a finished version of their work, a process approach aims to get to the

heart of the various skills that most writers employ – and which are, therefore, worth replicating when writing in a foreign language. Indeed, it might be possible to argue that editing and re-drafting are even more important when we are writing in a foreign language than when we are writing in our first language (Harmer, 2007: p.326).

It seems to the researcher that the importance and effectiveness of writing for writing and process approach to writing have not widely been understood and put into practice in the Turkish EFL context.

The product approach to writing, which reigned in the field of both L1 and L2 writing in the USA until the 1960s, is described by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) as a period in which students often did little writing and essays were written in one draft. It seems to the researcher that this description of Grabe and Kaplan is also valid for the teaching of writing in Turkish EFL context.

Several factors emerged in the 1960s caused a reaction to the product approach to writing. Among these factors, one was related with the success of teaching, which was the dissatisfaction of the teachers with the result they obtained by product approach to writing instruction in the USA and Australia. Another reason was the development of cognitive psychology. Cognitive psychology suggests that the inner workings of mind can be studied and complex skills take place as a result of the complex processes which require interaction of components working together. As a result of this development, applied linguists started to investigate the organization of discourse and text construction processes.

In addition to the applied linguistics, L2 writing research was conducted in education and composition. The problems of language minority students and other high-risk language arts students at elementary schools in the USA and Australia resulted in an increasing interest and awareness of writing in the public school. Before 1980s, the research focused on techniques

for teaching writing. Researchers and teachers examined the differences between good and bad writers. The research led to the emergence of the process approach to writing.

The term process writing is defined by Kroll (2001:p.220) as “a cyclical approach through which student writers engage in their writing tasks. Student writers are not expected to come up with complete and polished responses to their writing tasks without going through the stages of drafting and receiving feedback on their drafts from their peers and / or teachers and revising their text accordingly”.

In her study, Agnew (1995) provides a detailed explanation of the things performed in the different stages of writing process. Students are expected to develop their ideas by talking, reading, thinking and sometimes noting down ideas on paper in the prewriting stage. Kroll asserts that “prewriting is a topic well worth investing a lot of class time on because not knowing where or how to begin causes inexperienced writers to waste time that could be better invested in working to improve a draft of a paper in progress” (2001:p.223). Ideas for writing can be developed through activities such as brainstorming, clustering, listing and free-writing. Students may respond to aural, visual or printed materials. They may interview others to get information. Students begin to shape the needs of their audience and their purpose for writing in their minds.

Writing begins when students have a topic and ideas for writing. They put their ideas in the forms of sentences and paragraphs according to their purposes for writing. This stage requires a lot of concentration and writing is not easy work. Students may need extra materials to support their ideas with examples and /or facts.

In the revising stage of writing, students are supposed to make their sentences clearer by adding new information or extracting unnecessary ones. The aim is to construct and convey meaning as clearly as possible. Students may need to reorganize some sentences in the paragraphs to achieve a smooth transition of ideas from one paragraph to the other. In this

phase, students are required to read their compositions as readers and get feedback from their peers and / or teachers as audience. In the phase of editing, students check their writings in terms of spelling, capitalization, punctuation and grammar.

According to Grabe and Kaplan (1996:p.87) the approach which considers writing as a process, not a linear activity promotes the followings:

- writers discover themselves and their own voice as an author,
- writers have an opportunity to do meaningful writings on topics which are important or interesting to them,
- writing is planned out as a goal oriented activity,
- pre-writing tasks are performed and multiple drafts are written with feedback between drafts,
- feedback can be obtained from various sources such as peers, small groups and / or the teacher,
- content of the composition and personal expression are emphasized more than the grammar and usage in the final product,
- student writers can repeat the tasks as many as they deem necessary,
- student writers' awareness of writing process and notions such as audience, voice and plans is raised.

Under the light of the above-mentioned literature, the process approach to writing and writing with composing must be followed and emphasized in the instruction of writing in an EFL classroom.

2.3 Assessment of Writing

The assessment of writing involves both teacher response and more formal mechanisms (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Assessment of writing by teacher response takes place in classroom setting, while more formal mechanisms are used in standardized testing setting.

Classroom setting is interested in formative or summative assessment of writing whereas standardized testing aims to assess proficiency in writing.

When literature is searched, it is seen that writing skills have been assessed in three ways; indirect writing assessment, direct writing assessment and portfolio assessment approach to writing.

2.3.1 Indirect Assessment

Indirect assessment of writing involves standardized assessment of writing in which multiple-choice tests or cloze tests measures students' grammar, vocabulary and written expression knowledge. The use of this type of standardized indirect assessment of writing is preferred in situations which are not classroom-centered and it is used to measure writing skills of larger groups of students. The standardized indirect writing assessments were argued for and developed by psychometricians in 1950s and 1960s due to the increasing number of students at universities and an increasing demand for reliability which goes parallel with the improvements in the theory of testing (Camp, 1993; White, 1993).

The standardized indirect writing tests assume that writing ability consists of a set of sub-skills including sentence, grammar, vocabulary and points of writing usage. Two versions of the University of Michigan Tests, the Test of Standard Written English for English L1 writers (TSWE) and section 2 of the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) can be given as the examples of the standardized indirect measures of writing (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996). Some researchers showed high correlations between indirect and direct measures of writing in some studies (Fotos, 1991; Camp, 1993; and Breland et al, 1987).

On the other hand, the pedagogy of writing uses the term micro-skills for the production of writing and enumerates them as follows (Brown, 2001: p.343):

- production of orthographic patterns of English,
- production of writing at an efficient rate of speed,

- producing an acceptable core of words and using appropriate word order patterns,
- using acceptable grammatical systems, patterns and rules,
- conveying a particular meaning in different grammatical forms,
- using cohesive devices,
- using the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse,
- accomplishing the communicative functions of written texts appropriately taking form and purpose into consideration,
- communicating connections between events and convey such relations as main idea, supporting idea and exemplification,
- distinguishing between literal and implied meanings
- conveying culturally specific references correctly in the context of the written text,
- developing and using a battery of writing strategies such as accurately assessing the audience's interpretation, using pre-writing devices, using paraphrases, soliciting peer and instructor feedback and using feedback for revising and editing.

The literature which has just been mentioned above guided the methodology of the present study. So, the researcher decided to assess the participants' writing skills using both direct and indirect assessment methods in order to increase the reliability of the assessment.

2.3.2 Direct Assessment

The developments in the theory of testing; the issue of validity, especially construct and content validity caused direct assessment of writing to begin in 1970s (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Calfee & Perfumo, 1996; Finch, 1991; Camp, 1993). While construct validity answers the question of how meaningful and appropriate the interpretations that we make based on the test scores (Bachman and Palmer, 1996), content validity attempts to ensure that the test is a representative sample of the content which it claims to measure (Brown, 2005).

According to Hamp-Lyons, a direct test of writing should have five characteristics:

First, one piece of continuous text of 100 words or more must physically and actually be written by a test-taker. 100 words are regarded as a minimum sample. Second, writer is given a set of instructions and a text, picture or other prompts. Third, each text written by a test-taker is read at least one, usually two or more teachers. Fourth, the judgement of the readers must be matched to a description of expected performance or one or several rating scales. Fifth, the readers express their judgement as scores or written or verbal comments (non-quantitative assessment) (Hamp-Lyons, 1991:5).

Direct measurement of writing can be holistic or atomistic (Isaacson, 1988). Whereas atomistic measuring of a writing sample involves the counting of a single language feature; for example the number of words in the writing sample or the number of words per clause, a single score is assigned to a composition based on the overall impression of the composition in holistic measuring of a writing sample (Weigle, 2002).

Three main types of rating scales have been used for the direct assessment of writing; holistic scale, primary trait scale, analytic scale. Primary-trait scale measures how well a student can write within a narrowly defined range of discourse (e.g. persuasion or explanation) and it has not widely been used in second-language assessment whereas analytic scoring evaluates writing samples based on several features of writing such as content, organization, language use, vocabulary and mechanics (Weigle, 2002).

Holistic scoring of writing has recently been criticized for several disadvantages, especially in second-language context. These disadvantages are listed by Weigle as follows:

First, a single score is not useful enough to measure a person's writing ability because raters cannot distinguish between various aspects of writing such as content, organization and language use etc. based on only one score. In second language context, this disadvantage of holistic scoring becomes more prominent since it is known that different features of writing ability develop at different rates

for different writers. Second, it is difficult to interpret holistic scores because a 4 on a holistic scale may be given by a rater to a writing sample due to its rhetorical features, while a 4 may be given to the same composition by another rater due to its linguistic features (2002, p.110).

This discussion led the researcher to use an analytical scoring rubric, which was adapted from Jacobs et al (1981) and Sađlam (2005), to assess the participants' essays in the study.

When different theories of written language are compared, it is seen that writing product has five important features. These are fluency, content, conventions, syntax and vocabulary (Isaacson, 1988). Atomistic measurement of fluency is performed by counting the total number of words in a writing sample.

The study conducted by Thomas and Donlan (1980) examined the correlations between holistic and atomistic methods of evaluating student writing. A random sample of 175 compositions written by grades four/ five and seven through twelve on the same topic (a lost suitcase) was used. A panel of three readers made the holistic evaluations of the compositions. The scores for the compositions were then correlated with six extrinsic variables: a) the number of words, b) the number of T-units, c) the number of words per T-unit, d) the number of items in suitcase, e) the number of described items, f) the number of non-clothing items. It was found that the number of words was the variable most highly correlated with quality despite grade level. The studies conducted by Anderson (1982), Daiute (1986) and Grobe (1981) also showed correlation between fluency and other measures of writing skills.

Another feature of written language which was found to be improving in the writing styles of fluent writers is syntax. Syntax has been commonly measured by the length of T-units. T-unit means terminable unit consisting of a subject and a predicate Hunt (1965). Subordinate clauses, phrases or modifiers can be found attached to or embedded within a T-unit (Isaacson, 1988). Thomas & Donlan (1980) cites that several researchers Loban (1976), Hunt (1965), O'Donnell, Griffin and Norris (1967) and O'Hare (1973) consistently proved that the mean

length of T-units increased in student compositions grade level by grade level. Isaacson also states that Hunt and other researchers have found T-unit length to be highly reliable and positively correlated with other measures of written expression (1988).

Inspired by the above-mentioned studies, the researcher decided to use these two parameters of atomistic measurement of writing- the number of words and mean T-unit length (MTUL) as well as the direct and indirect measures of the participants' writing skills in the present study and investigated the correlations between these four measures of writing assessment.

The quality of student writing in schools has been investigated both nationally and internationally. One of these studies was conducted by the International Evaluation of Educational Achievement (The IEA) in the USA. The Study conducted by this organization- the Study of Written Composition (The SWC)- investigated the quality of student writing in schools by collecting and evaluating student compositions focusing on 6th, 10th and 12th grades. The study described the range of writing tasks and topics and revealed that US students' compositions met the standard for minimally competent writing on major discourse tasks (narrative, persuasive and reflective essays) (Baker, 1987).

Lofqvist (1990) replicated the IEA Study of Written Composition in Sweden. The aim of the study was to elucidate and describe the content of the teaching of writing, methodology and evaluation methods.

In the present study, the researcher used the original writing tasks which were used (descriptive, narrative and reflective essays) in the International Evaluation of Educational Achievement Study of Written Composition (The IEA-SWC) for the direct assessment of the participants' writing ability.

2.3.3 Authentic Assessment

Multiple choice tests have been widely used in the assessment of education. However, for at least three decades, the insufficiency of these tests in the assessment of students' actual and thorough performance has been felt by educators. In addition, the developments in the theories of learning and teaching revealed that higher-order thinking skills should be emphasized in education since the number and degree of competencies which learners are supposed to have in today's world are gradually increasing. In today's world, knowing means performing and using the existing knowledge to produce new ideas, solve complex problems and persuade others (Resnick & Klopfer, 1989).

On the other hand, multiple-choice tests focusing on discrete skills restrict the curriculum and learning to lower level skills and it does not foster the integrated use of skills, which in fact leads to true learning. All these factors and needs also appeared in the field of English language learning. Therefore, educators have striven to find alternative assessment methods which are similar to the instructional activities performed in the classroom (O'Malley & Valdez Pierce, 1996).

Alternative assessment, which has emerged as a reaction to multiple choice tests, is defined by Stiggins (1991) as any method attempting to measure students' actual and thorough performance. According to Hamayan (1995, p.213), "alternative assessment refers to procedures and techniques which can be used within the context of instruction and can be easily incorporated into the daily activities of the school or classroom" (cited in Tannenbaum, 1996). In Huerta- Macias' opinion (1995), alternative assessment makes it possible to evaluate students "on what they integrate and produce rather than what they are able to recall and reproduce" in contrast to traditional testing (p.9, cited in Tannenbaum, 1996).

Alternative assessment is by definition criterion-referenced and typically authentic because it is based on activities that represent classroom and real-life settings (O'Malley & Valdez

Pierce, 1996:pp.1-2). It is also stated by Jones & Shelton that there is a powerful connection between authentic assessment and Constructivism since authentic learning makes the essence of Constructivism (2006, cited in Öztürk and Çeçen, 2007). Constructivism intends to make learners aware of what they know and how they have learned it, what knowing something means, and how each individual's developmental stages of learning something differ from the other. These authentic assessment techniques are performance assessment, student self-assessment and portfolios. The use of portfolios in EFL classrooms is recommended by a large amount of theoretical research (Rea, 2001).

In this study, the researcher is interested in portfolios, particularly writing portfolios, because writing portfolios provide students with a chance to improve their writing skills in a relatively long period of time for example, during one term at least. Writing portfolios do not assess EFL students' writing ability based on one timed writing task. Quite the contrary, they give students the chance of being assessed based on several different writings produced over a period of time in a process writing class. Improvement in EFL writing skills is also observed and evaluated by students as a result of the development in their higher-order thinking skills and meta-cognitive awareness through reflection letters students are supposed to write about the essays in their portfolios. Reflection letters provide students with opportunities to think about their own thinking and learning.

2.4 Portfolios

Portfolio is defined as a systematic and purposeful collection of student work which is evaluated to show progress over time according to the instructional objective of a given course. Portfolios were originally used by artists, writers and photographers to display their best work. Valencia asserts that "portfolio is a tool for expanding the quantity and quality of information we use to assess learning and growth" (Valencia, 1991:pp.33-34).

It is mentioned by Finch that “portfolios can be used in many different ways. A portfolio can represent an informal collection of student work or it may include a highly structured collection of performance samples related to specific predetermined activities” (1991:p.15).

In Arter’s point of view, “there are really only two basic reasons for doing portfolios- assessment or instruction. Assessment uses relate to keeping track of what students know and can do. Instructional uses relate to promoting learning-student learn something from assembling the portfolio” (1995:p.2).

It is stated by Tierney et al. (1991) that there is no right way to implement portfolios; each child's portfolio includes documents which differ from others.

The content of portfolios depends on the purpose of them. Writing samples, tests, homework, quizzes, art work, projects and assignments, student reflection letters, self-assessment checklists and peer and teacher feedback and comments can be kept in a portfolio according to the purpose of it (Hancock, 1994). Fenwick states that the pieces in a portfolio reflect the content of a given course. In her opinion, learner portfolios usually include any of the following items (1996:p.3):

- Learner’s formal written papers, articles, descriptions, case studies and problem solutions,
- Assessment inventories (such as personality or learning style inventories)
- Photographs or drawings of learner-created products, artwork
- Videotapes of learner actions or presentations
- Learner journal, memos or personal responses
- Written reports(attestations to learner performance by others such as peers and colleagues or supervisors
- Test papers and results
- Written observations of learner performance contributed by the instructor.

From the perspective of writing assessment, Coombe & Barlow (2004) define a portfolio as a purposeful collection of writing samples of students over a certain period of time which shows how a text has evolved along the stages of writing process and how a student writer has improved (cited in Öztürk & Çeçen, 2007).

In an article Paulson, Paulson and Meyer (1991) report that portfolios may serve as an intersection of instruction and assessment, which is not something traditional approaches do. Some of the features of a good portfolio are listed by them as follows:

- Students have an opportunity to learn about learning.
- Students build portfolios. Portfolios are not something done to students.
- Students learn to value themselves as learners and their work.
- Students may keep everything in a portfolio during the year. However, at the end of the year portfolio functions in a different way and only the best pieces of students are selected and displayed in it by students themselves.

Wolf (1996) reports that “portfolios retain almost uniquely the potential for documenting the unfolding of both teaching and learning over time and combining that documentation with opportunities to teachers to engage in the analysis of what they and their students have done” (p.130, as cited in Koçoğlu, 2006).

In Hamp-Lyons and Condon’s opinion (2000), a good portfolio of writing has nine features (cited in Bayram, 2006). They also stress that all of these may not exist totally or equally in a portfolio. These features are as follows:

- The first one is collection. A portfolio includes several pieces of work, not a single one.
- The second is range. A portfolio includes pieces of work on various genres which display different areas of expertise of the writer.

- The third one is richness in content. Writers use their background knowledge and read more to write pieces on various subjects.
- The fourth one is delayed assessment. Students are allowed to go back and revise their writings.
- The fifth one is selection. Students have the opportunity to select the pieces to be put in the portfolio.
- The sixth one is student-centered control. The success of the portfolio is students' responsibility.
- The seventh one is reflection and self-assessment. Students see a whole term's work in front of them and they are supposed to reflect on how they have selected the pieces in the portfolio and on their learning process. Such meta-cognitive awareness is essential for further learning.
- The eighth one is growth along specific parameters. Students have the opportunity to ask questions about their growth according to the predetermined parameters.
- The ninth one is development over time. A good portfolio focuses on learning and assessment of progress over a period of time.

It is also asserted by Arter that “strong portfolio systems are characterized by a clear vision of the student skills to be addressed, student involvement in selecting what goes into the portfolio, use of criteria to define quality performance and provide a basis for communication, and self-reflection through which students share what they think and feel about their work, their learning environment and themselves” (1995:p.5).

2.4.1 Types of Portfolios

The types of portfolios are described under different names in the literature although their functions seem to be alike. This point of view is also emphasized by Belanoff & Dickson

(1991) in the introduction of their book and they state that “portfolios are used for remarkably similar reasons, even though the portfolios and the systems in which they are embedded may differ greatly”. Some of them are discussed below:

Three types of portfolios according to their main functions are documentation, evaluation and showcase portfolios (Valencia and Calfee, 1991):

In a documentation portfolio, a detailed account of student work and progress over time are presented. A compilation of work and assessment of student work by the teacher or student are contained by this type of portfolios. The student and teacher may select and keep completed tasks, projects and as well as tests, quizzes, checklists and graded work with teacher comments in the portfolio.

An evaluation portfolio aims to standardize its contents and the criteria by which the contents are assessed. Each student is required to include common contents such as a set of tasks or projects and a reflective journal, which brings consistency to the work which included in the portfolio. Thus, learning and achievement are evaluated in a standardized manner.

Selection and representation of individual students’ best work is promoted through a showcase portfolio. Like the other types of portfolios, a showcase portfolio expects students to be able to reflect on their work and self-evaluate their growth. Students can include a wide range of items such as papers, projects to display the nature of their progress.

Portfolios are classified into three by Jenkins (1996, cited in Bayram) as collaborative, benchmark and showcase. A collaborative portfolio enables the teacher and student work together in selecting the pieces to be included and setting the goals. Thus, both the teacher and student have equal authority over the portfolio. Showcase portfolio is learner-centered whereas a benchmark portfolio is teacher-centered.

Three types of portfolios described by O’Malley and Valdez-Pierce (1996) are collection, showcase and assessment portfolios. A collection portfolio functions like a documentation

portfolio. It contains all facets and phases of learning process. An assessment portfolio enables students and teachers plan future learning activities and display progress towards basic and advanced mastery of predetermined instructional objectives.

Portfolios are classified into three by Wolf & Siu-Runyan (1996, cited in Sağlam) as ownership, feedback and accountability:

Student's choice and self-assessment are emphasized in an ownership portfolio. A wide array of information demonstrating learners' progress in reading and writing is presented in this type of portfolio. Learners reflect on the development of their work according to the learning goals they set beforehand.

Students and teachers collaborate to construct feedback portfolios. Ongoing documentation of student learning characterizes this type of portfolios. Student work and reflections, teacher's records on student learning and information from parents and peers are included in the portfolio to have insights about the student's strengths, interests and needs.

In this classification, the third model is accountability portfolio. Selective collections of student work based on certain criteria are kept in this portfolio. This type of portfolio mainly aims to assess the student's achievement for accountability and evaluation.

It seems not to be wrong to discuss electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) as a type of portfolio. An electronic portfolio is defined by (Wiedmer,1998) as "a purposeful collection of work, captured by electronic means, which serves as an exhibit of individual efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas" (p.586, cited in Koçoğlu, 2006). The fact that information is collected, saved and stored in an electronic environment differs e-portfolios from traditional portfolios (Barret, 1996 as cited in Koçoğlu, 2006).

2.4.2 Portfolio as an Assessment Tool

Portfolio assessment is defined by Hancock (1994) as a type of alternative assessment in which the students and teacher work together over a certain period of time with the aim of

documenting the student's growth. In portfolio assessment, "the teacher plays a crucial role in providing feedback to students" (O'Malley-Valdez Pierce, 1996:p.43).

It is cited by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) that a portfolio approach to writing assessment is a recent major direction in assessment both in large scale and in classroom context. Several projects, their methods and the results are described by Belanoff and Dickson (1991) and Tierney et al. (1991).

Elbow and Belanoff (1991) describe their large-scale portfolio assessment in advanced writing class at the State University of New York (SUNY) at Stonybrook in the USA. In the study, students are asked to collect three revised essays, one in-class essay and cover sheets for each essay telling the process of writing and the purpose of each essay in their portfolios. A narrative, descriptive or expressive essay, an academic essay and an essay analyzing and criticizing another essay must be included by the students in the portfolio in this study. They state that although the program is found effective in making students write more and better, the following problems have appeared in the study: Teachers have to do more work to evaluate student writing, students may cheat on each other's essay. It may be felt by some teachers that the course is overwhelmed by portfolio. On the other hand, the followings are reported as the strengths of the program: Students feel that they have to take the writing process more seriously, audience is a realistic concern for them, they have to write about a wide range of topics and they have to reflect on their writings.

Mills-Courts and Amiran (1991) describe another large scale portfolio assessment program implemented at State University of New York College at Fredonia. The program aimed to assess student progress in three areas: reading, writing and reflective thinking. The architects of this program believe that an ideal environment to practice reflective and critical thinking is offered by portfolios. Portfolios create situations in which students feel the necessity to ponder on how they think, how they learn and why they fail to learn. The awareness of their

own learning processes enables students to set goals for their education. The students in the creative writing class at the college keep every draft of each piece of writing. The drafts are not graded by the teachers, but both the teacher and peers rigorously comment on them and the drafts are distributed back to the writer. The objective of the course is to develop writers' skills. That's why the students are expected to revise their writings again and again. The teachers are very satisfied with the result of the program as quoted below:

Portfolio process creates excitement, commitment and a warm, relaxed sense of community in the classroom. The students readily discern the differences between first and last drafts and importantly they take ownership of their own work. The work belongs to them, matters to them in ways that rarely occur in typical classroom situations. They feel empowered by this collection that clearly demonstrate how far they have come, that is the concrete evidence of their own growth as learners (p.106).

In another study of writing portfolios at elementary level conducted by Gearhart et al. (1992), portfolios were composed of a working file including every draft of the writing assignment focusing on the writing process and a smaller showcase file of students' best pieces focusing on writing product. The study aimed at investigating portfolio assessment as a method of evaluating elementary school students' competence in writing. It was an empirical study of the utility and meaningfulness of using a holistic/analytic scoring rubric to score students' portfolios and a qualitative analysis of scoring approaches. The results of the study showed that holistic ratings of class work and of portfolio collections can be achieved with high levels of rater agreement in comparison to traditional writing assessment.

The study of Nunes (2004) emphasizes the role of portfolio as an assessment tool and reveals that teachers in EFL classroom not only diagnose the students' skills and competences but also become aware of their learning strategies and styles, preferences and dispositions through portfolios. The study was conducted with fourteen 10th grade students at a Portuguese

high school over a period of one year, and students were asked to put everything related with their learning English. Questionnaires were prepared and used by the researcher to help students to reflect on their learning. The students' reflections were categorized into four domains. These were instruction, assessment, learning and syllabus. It was seen that the students reflected on learning and instruction the most whereas assessment and syllabus the least. Assessment and the syllabus design were considered as the responsibilities of the teachers by the students. This misconception of the students was interpreted by the researcher as a result of the long tradition of assessment in education which focuses on product.

Another study of portfolio as an assessment tool was conducted by Song and August (2002). The study compared the performances of two groups of advanced ESL students in a composition course. When the course finished, one group was assessed based on portfolios and a writing assessment test while the other group was assessed only through writing assessment test. The study investigated the pass rates of the groups and the distribution of their grades in the next writing course. It was found that the number of students who passed the course based on portfolio was nearly twice of the number of the students who passed the course on the basis of the test result. In addition, no significant difference between the groups' grade distribution in the next course was observed. The result was interpreted that portfolio assessment was more effective in identifying the students who would be successful in the next English course.

Barootchi and Keshavarz (2002) conducted a study on the assessment of achievement through portfolios and teacher-made tests. A Nelson English Language Proficiency Test, portfolio assessment, a teacher-made achievement test and a satisfaction questionnaire prepared by the researchers were used as the instruments of the study. An experimental group (n=30) of Iranian female sophomores learning English was assessed by teacher-made tests and portfolios whereas a control group (n=30) was assessed by tests only. It was found that

portfolio assessment contributed to achievement and student responsibility for learning. Portfolio scores correlated significantly with test scores. In this study, the researchers emphasized the effectiveness of portfolios in increasing the achievement of Iranian EFL learners and their role as assessment tools in improving learners' attitude towards monitoring their learning experiences and awareness of their progress.

In Turkey, Şahinkarakaş (1998) investigated the implementation and assessment of writing portfolios with a group of preparatory class university students. She stated that portfolio assessment system in writing classes helped students improve their writing ability as well as their meta-cognitive skills. It was found that writing portfolio was a very effective technique in improving writing and meta-cognitive skills of the students in tertiary education.

Sağlam (2005) conducted a case study on the possible effects of portfolio assessment on proficiency development and classroom practices of EFL students in a Turkish military high school as opposed to the traditional assessment techniques. The study revealed that students receiving portfolio assessment performed significantly higher than those who received traditional assessment in two different administration of Cambridge First Certificate Examination (CFCE). Portfolio assessment scores were also consistent with the scores received in CFCE.

2.4.3 Portfolio as an Instructional Tool

Grabe and Kaplan (1996:p.336) suggest that “portfolios as an instructional tool have lots of potential benefits in teaching writing”. Manning (2000) describes writing portfolios as a teaching method which encourages students to take responsibility for their learning, also states that the use of portfolios gives students an opportunity to take ‘ownership’ and ‘pride’ in their work.

Järvinen (2004) mentions a writing portfolio project as a sub-project of the European Language Portfolio Project. The project aimed to investigate ways for the application of the

Common European Framework into the teaching of writing in Finland. The Writing Portfolio Project also aimed at advancing the learner-writers' level from A2, B1 to B2 or possibly C1. The project lasted for 9 months between August 2001 and May 2002. Seven writing tasks were produced during the project. The majority of essay titles were taken from the textbook in use. The results of the project were not reported.

Several action research studies in the literature show that writing portfolios have been successfully used in order to improve ESL writing skills of elementary school students in the USA. Some of them are being discussed below:

The action research study conducted by Agnew (1995) aimed to improve students' writing skills through whole language instruction. The study was conducted with thirty fifth grade students in a middle class in Rockford, Illinois. Data gathered from norm-referenced tests, review of students' portfolios, quality and quantity of assignments completed and a student survey were used to report students' writing deficiencies. It was revealed by the analysis of probable cause data that students had had sufficient instruction neither in the different types of writing nor in the steps of writing. The students did not see themselves as writers and had not had the opportunity to reflect on their writing in a meaningful way. The researcher used writing portfolio, authentic writing units, a writer's workshop, frequent teacher-student conferences and self- and peer assessment as solution strategies. The improvement in the quality and quantity of students' writing ability was proved based on improved test scores on standardized tests and teacher observation of writing samples.

In the action research conducted by Garcia, Meyer and Walsh (2002) as their dissertation thesis, portfolios as well as guided mini-lessons and conferencing were used as an intervention strategy to improve writing skills of 1st and 2nd graders. The problems of poor writing skills of first and second grade students were documented through teacher observations and student writing samples. The probable causes of this were analyzed and it

was revealed that students lacked skills related to inventive spelling, handwriting and sentence structure. The curricula of the school was reviewed that a writing curriculum did not exist in the primary grades. It was stated by the researchers that post intervention data indicated an improvement in the quality and quantity of the students' writings. It was also observed that students' attitudes towards writing changed through the course of the intervention, both in positive and negative ways.

Another action research conducted by Kowalewski, Murphy and Starn (2002) also aimed to improve overall writing skills of fourth and fifth grade students in Northern Illinois. The students' writing deficiencies were documented by their writing scores, teacher assessments and student self-evaluations. A lack of skills related to organization and revision in the writing process was revealed by the analysis of probable cause data. When instructional strategies reviewed, it was seen that writing instruction lacked teacher modeling, instruction using literature connections, time provided for student writing, revision, self-assessment and reflection. New teaching strategies as well as keeping a writing portfolio were defined as solution strategies by the researchers. The results of the action research project demonstrated a marked improvement in student writing skills.

Anderson, Mallo, Nee and Wear (2003) used portfolios as well as journal writing as an intervention strategy to improve the writing skills of the first and fifth graders in their action research. The study was conducted with 118 participants by four researchers. A survey, observations, and a document analysis were used to assess the progress of students' writing skills. The survey was administered to the teachers to provide insight on possible problems related with students' writing performance. Observations included a behavior checklist designed to assist researchers with documenting students' progress on class writing assignments. An improvement in the quality and quantity of the students' writings was

observed. It was also observed that students' attitudes towards writing changed through the course of the intervention, both in positive and negative ways.

The writing portfolio study conducted by Tan (2004) aimed to develop and assess writing skills of the seventh grade students in a process writing class at a state primary school in Turkey. The results indicated that writing portfolio in a process writing class helped students to improve their writing skills.

The study conducted by Bayram (2006) investigated the role of writing portfolios in increasing learners' confidence in writing and possible attitude changes towards writing. It was conducted with 60 pre-intermediate level students in the preparatory school of Zonguldak Karaelmas University. The data were gathered by two questionnaires, interviews, reflection papers, peer- and self-assessment sheets. No significant difference was found after the treatment in the students' confidence level in writing. However, significant increase in the experimental group students' attitudes towards writing was documented. The study also examined the attitudes of students and teachers towards using writing portfolios as a self-assessment tool. It was found that both students and teachers were positive towards using writing portfolios as a self-assessment tool.

In the study conducted by Yang (2003), portfolios were explored as a tool which helps student learning and develops learner autonomy. The study was piloted with 42 students at the preparatory class in Taiwan University in the academic year of 2000-2001. The main study was conducted in the following year with a class of 45 students. Two listening and reading tests from a General English Proficiency test prepared by the Language Training and Testing Center in Taiwan were used to measure the students' proficiency before and after the study. The same listening tests were used for both pre and post-tests, but there was a nine month interval between the tests. Data related to the students' beliefs and attitudes about the use of portfolios and their learning style preferences were gathered by both open-ended and Likert-

scale questionnaires. The results of the study demonstrated that portfolios were a useful tool in raising students' awareness of learning strategies, facilitating their learning process and enhancing their self-directed learning. Portfolios were also found to be significantly effective in improving listening proficiency of the participants.

Öztürk and Çeçen (2007) investigated the effects of portfolio keeping on the writing anxiety of EFL students. The study conducted with a fifteen prospective teachers of English in their preparatory year at a foundation university in İstanbul. Second Language Writing Anxiety Questionnaire (SLWA) (Cheng, 2004), a background questionnaire and two reflective sessions were used to gather data. Portfolio keeping was found to be beneficial in overcoming writing anxiety.

All these studies demonstrate that portfolio is a versatile tool which can be used for many purposes, in many ways. Its unique features make it the focus of teaching and learning process. Another use of portfolios for another purpose is being discussed below.

2.4.4 Portfolio as a Self-assessment Tool

Self-assessment is described as in the following by Henner-Stanchina & Holec (cited in Harris, 1997):

Learners simultaneously create and undergo the evaluation procedure, judging their achievement in relation to themselves against their own personal criteria, in accordance with their own objectives and learning expectations ((1985:p98).

In the conventional education system, such an education atmosphere seems to be rare, if not impossible. In many EFL classrooms, English is compulsory and it is not considered by students as a means for communication. Quite the contrary, it is just one of the other lessons such as history and mathematics they have to pass. The goals of instruction are defined through the teacher by the curriculum. When it becomes the tradition and case, it seems to be unreasonable to expect students to become active learners all of a sudden and take responsibility for their own learning. They need to be trained by means of self-assessment

activities regularly and systematically during a course. Harris (1997) gives an in-depth explanation of these initial self-assessment activities that should be performed at the beginning of a course in an EFL classroom. He also asserts that self-assessment enables students to determine their strengths and weaknesses.

On the other hand, portfolio is a learner-centered technique which promotes student self-assessment and it can easily be integrated into even a formal, traditional education system. Portfolio assessment increases student involvement in the learning process by training students about how to plan, monitor and evaluate their learning by reflection letters, peer and self-assessment checklists. Thus, it enables students to become aware of their learning objectives, progress and evaluation criteria.

In the case of writing portfolios, “self-evaluation of writing promotes a reflective approach to learning and contributes to an understanding of effective writing processes” (O’Malley & Valdez-Pierce, 1996:p.13). Using portfolios, even in a deeply established traditional education system paves the way for students to have a chance to turn into active, self-regulated learners by getting out of the role cast on them as passives.

As it is in the experience of McClelland at California University (1991), portfolios can relieve the teachers of English or the instructors of writing in English of the burden of grading and persuading students why their composition gets B instead of A. Portfolios can help them and their students to focus on the real teaching and learning process rather than grading. Because, focusing on grading causes students to expect less from the course and themselves as writers. It is not rare to hear students saying “a C is enough for me to pass the course. It is not worth making effort”. She exemplifies the extent of self-assessment to which her students reached through writing portfolios as follows:

I was delightful to find that the students and I did agree about the grades when I read their self-evaluations. They had thoughtful reasons for the grades they proposed. One of the students wrote “I did not work as much as I could have on P3

(paragraph)- the transitions between paragraphs are still rough, so it just doesn't flow well. But P5 is the best one I've ever done; I did a good job of describing the way I felt. I think overall I do better than just making a point with examples, but I need to work on crafting. I think overall I'm a B writer" (p.168).

2.4.5 Benefits of Portfolios

In Arter's opinion, the benefits of portfolios in terms of instruction are these; "they can help students to develop self-reflection, critical thinking and responsibility for learning and content area skills and knowledge" (1995:p.5). Besides, Fenwick lists these benefits as follows (1996:pp.5-6):

- Portfolios show learner growth over time
- Portfolios involve learners directly in their own learning and evaluation
- Portfolios show the process of learning, not just outcomes
- Portfolios build learner confidence, they have a powerful effect on student self-esteem
- Portfolios are holistic measures of learning. They contain a diverse samples of work that demonstrates a variety of interconnected learner knowledge and skills
- Portfolios are learning experience in themselves. To assemble a portfolio, learners must reflect on their learning, evaluate their own learning product, make selections representing their own competencies and rationalize their choices. This process is a powerful way to raise student's awareness of the learning process.
- Portfolios are useful for learners seeking employment
- Portfolios are useful indicators of gaps in the program. Curriculum and instruction can be evaluated by means of portfolios.
- Portfolios are an effective means for faculty development.

Barton and Collins (1997:p.9) enumerate the benefits of portfolios as in the following:

- Portfolios will give you and your students an ongoing opportunity to communicate about the learning that takes place over time in your classroom.
- Portfolios will enable you to view student work in context.
- Portfolios will encourage a shift in ownership of learning onto your students. Students will learn how to make decisions about the quality and usefulness of their own work, and these decisions can lead to a strong sense of personal accomplishment.
- Portfolios will help you to create a forum for students to communicate their ideas in a supportive environment.
- Portfolios will help you become a better instructor. The portfolio process will encourage you to constantly consider what you really want your students to accomplish.

2.4.6 Challenges of Portfolios

Portfolios provide lots of benefits, but it does not mean that they do not have any disadvantages. The disadvantages of portfolios are summarized as the matters of design decision, logistics, interpretation, reliability and validity by Brown and Hudson (1998, cited in Song & August, 2002).

Another challenge of portfolios is the demand for time they create. As it is stated by Elbow and Belanoff (1991) and Manning (2000), portfolios increase the work of teachers because the assessment of portfolios is time consuming. Second, portfolios raise some affective disadvantages; some teachers feel responsible if their students' portfolios fail. The teachers may feel as if they have also failed. The third challenge of portfolios is the need for professional training; some novice and even experienced teachers feel that writing lessons are overwhelmed by portfolios. Fourth, some students may cheat on their peers' essays. Some precautions should be taken to prevent this. Lastly, some teachers think that the opportunity of revising portfolios protects some lazy students from work of revising too much. They insist on

help from their teachers and peers too much. Some students may find drafting, composing and revising processes tiresome although they are good students.

Another concern in large scale portfolio assessment is reliability and validity. Reliability means to ensure objectivity and standardize the rating process. Consistency and fairness of scoring, rater agreement and equitable assessment settings are the problems of portfolios related to reliability (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 1993; Fenwick, 1996). Validity of portfolios concerns the adequacy of portfolios in demonstrating students' work and progress in skills. Besides, it attempts to answer the question of whether the purposes and design of portfolios match.

In their large scale portfolio assessment program, Hamp-Lyons & Condon (1991) summarize some of the problems they face: First, what will be put into the portfolio is the first issue to be agreed on. The second one is the uniformity of teaching. All the instructors must teach the same thing in the same way. They realize that faculty members stress different points of writing and argumentative essay in their instruction. The third one is the reliability and fairness of the assessment. How many raters will read the portfolios? What criteria will be used in assessment? And the fourth point of consensus among faculty member is plagiarism, how it can be detected and prevented?

Teacher commitment should also be noted as one of the important concerns about portfolio assessment. The success of portfolio assessment depends on teachers because teachers form one significant group among the stakeholders of portfolio assessment. Teachers' awareness of benefits of portfolios should be increased by professional training. As it is claimed by Worthen and Larson (1992; 1996, cited in Sağlam), changes are put into practice by only passionate teachers; unless there are competent and determined teachers, any alternative assessment method is destined to result in failure.

It seems that all the above-mentioned problems of portfolio assessment stand as the most essential, positive elements of portfolios. They strongly indicate that portfolio assessment is quite meaningful and combines instruction and assessment.

2.5 Summary

The chapter has presented a review of literature with respect to the nature of writing, instruction of writing and the three approaches to the assessment of writing; indirect, direct and authentic assessment. The chapter has also discussed portfolios as a type of authentic assessment. The types and studies of portfolios as a tool for both instructing and assessing writing in a second or foreign language have been reviewed. Besides, the literature with respect to portfolios as a self-assessment tool and the benefits and challenges of portfolios has been briefly examined in the chapter.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Setting

The study was conducted at a state secondary school in İstanbul. The researcher was one of the English Language teachers working at the school. The teenagers living in the district generally attend the state secondary school, where the study was conducted, after completing elementary school. The population of the school was 1600.

3.2 Participants

The study was conducted with twenty tenth graders in the language class at a state secondary school. Before the study, a background questionnaire was administered to the participants and it was seen that except one student, all of them were graduates of state elementary schools and started to learn English in grade four at elementary school. They were 16-17 years old. They had never been abroad before and their parents did not know English. Thus, twenty-seven students were found eligible to the study at the beginning. However, seven of them quit the study without completing the writing assignments. Therefore, the study was completed with twenty participants. Fourteen of them were females whereas only six of them were males. The participants had 13 hours of English per week, only 5 hours of which was taught by the researcher, and they were planning to study language at university as a major. The education year of 2008-2009 was the first year of the students in the language class. Their proficiency level was assumed to be elementary (A1, A2) according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and the class was a mixed ability class.

3.3 Research Design

The study is an action research study and has a quasi-experimental research design. This quasi-experimental research design was used to answer the second research question worded

as ‘What is the effect of writing portfolios on the writing skills of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students?’ and portfolio was used as an intervention strategy, the difference between the means of the participants’ pre and post intervention writing assessments was computed through paired samples T-test. Pearson Product-Moment correlation was computed by SPSS (11.5) to investigate the third research question worded as ‘Is there a relationship between the four different measures of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students’ writing skills?’

Qualitative data about the effect of writing portfolios on the tenth grade Turkish EFL students’ writing skills were gathered through guided reflection letters about essays and writing portfolio, and focus group interview. The reflection letter about essay consisted of open-ended questions which were prepared by the researcher in order to help the participants reflect on the process they went through while writing each essay.

The questionnaire of Writing Interest and Awareness was used to investigate the first research question worded as ‘What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students’ interest in and awareness of writing in English?’ Besides, some questions at the focus group interview provided insight regarding the participants’ awareness of EFL writing.

The third research question worded as ‘What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students’ opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills?’ was examined by means of a guided reflection letter about writing portfolio and focus group interview. The letter on writing portfolio consisted of open-ended questions which were prepared by the researcher in order to help the participants reflect on their writing portfolios and the effect of writing portfolios on their writing skills.

3.4 Data Collection

3.4.1 Instruments of the Study

A multi-method approach was used to investigate the effect of writing portfolios on the Turkish EFL students’ writing skills; both quantitative and qualitative data were collected to

increase the reliability of the study. The data were collected in six months. Several Instruments were used to collect data:

A questionnaire called Writing Interest and Awareness (see Appendix A) was developed by the researcher in order to investigate the tenth grade state school students' interest in and awareness of writing in English. The researcher adapted some of the items (1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 17, 18, 19 and 20) proposed by O'Malley and Valdez-Pierce (1996) and Raimes (1987). The questionnaire was piloted on seventy-five 10th grade students at the school where the study was conducted and found to be significantly reliable ($\alpha = 0,83$).

The questionnaire (see Appendix A) consisted of twenty questions, sixteen of which were five-point Likert scale questions and four were open-ended ones. The first sixteen questions were positively stated and the scoring of the questions was as follows: Always=5, Often=4, Sometimes=3, Rarely=2 and Never=1. The questions were first written in Turkish, and then translated into English. The questionnaire was administered to the participants in Turkish because their level of English was not enough to understand it in English.

The questions 1 and 4, which were respectively worded as 'I like to write compositions in English' and 'It is enjoyable to write compositions in English.' were designed to tap into the participants' interest in writing in English.

The questions 2 and 3 which were respectively worded as 'I am good at writing compositions in English' and 'For me, it is easy to write compositions in English' were designed to tap into the participants' self-confidence in writing in English.

The 5th item, which was worded as 'I learn better when I write.' was designed to check the participants' awareness of the help of writing in learning.

The questions 6 and 8 which were respectively worded as 'I ask my friends to read my compositions in English lessons' and 'I get feedback from my peers about my compositions in English lessons' were designed to examine the participants' awareness of receiving peer

feedback and the 11th item worded as ‘I find it useful to get feedback from my peers about my compositions in English lessons’ was designed to tap into the participants’ awareness of the usefulness of peer feedback.

The 9th item which was worded as ‘At home, I do writing homework in English.’ was designed to tap into the participants’ awareness of doing writing homework in English at home.

The questions 10 and 12 were used to investigate the participants’ awareness of receiving teacher feedback about their compositions. They were respectively worded as: ‘I get feedback from my English language teachers about the content of my compositions’ and ‘In English lessons, I get feedback from my English language teachers about the mistakes in my compositions’.

And the items 7 and 16 which were respectively worded as ‘I find it useful to get feedback from my English language teachers about the content of my compositions’ and ‘In English lessons, I find it useful to get feedback from my English language teachers about the mistakes in my compositions’ were used to investigate the participants’ awareness of the usefulness of teacher feedback about the content of and mistakes in their compositions in English.

The questions 13, 14 and 15, assigned to examine the participants’ awareness of drafting and revising when they write in English. They were respectively worded as ‘I rewrite my compositions correcting the mistakes underlined by my English language teacher’, ‘I revise my compositions a few times in English lessons’ and ‘In English lessons, I write my compositions a few times until I reach the best one’.

The students’ baseline writing skills were assessed by a standardized proficiency test, KET A2 Reading & Writing section (2004), and three timed writing tasks (descriptive, narrative and reflective). The writing tasks were adapted from the IEA Study of Written Composition in

Sweden (Lofqvist,1990).The tasks were the original ones used in IEA international study (see Appendix B).

The qualitative data providing information about the effect of writing portfolios on the participants' writing skills were gathered through guided reflection letters about essay and writing portfolio, and focus group interview. The reflection letter about essay consisted of open-ended questions which were prepared by the researcher (see Appendix C) in order to help the participants reflect on the process they went through while writing each essay.

The reflection letter about writing portfolio (see Appendix D) and some questions of the focus group interview (see Appendix E) provided qualitative data regarding the third research question entitled as 'What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills?'. The reflection letter about writing portfolio included open-ended questions which were prepared by the researcher in order to help the participants reflect on their writing portfolios and the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills.

The focus group interview (see Appendix E) was a semi-structured one. The wording and sequence of questions were prepared beforehand, but they were open-ended questions. The participants were allowed to elaborate on them. The researcher asked some additional questions in reaction to the responses of the participants during the focus group. 50 % of the male and female participants were enabled to be represented at the interview. A list of girls and boys were formed and seven of girls and three of boys were randomly selected. The participants were interviewed in three groups. Two groups consisted of three participants while one group consisted of four students in order to represent half of the participants.

3.4.2 Pilot study

In the 1st week of October, the Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire was piloted on 75 students from the 10th classes other than the language class. The questionnaire consisted

of 20 questions, 16 of which were five- point Likert scale questions and 4 open-ended ones. The reliability analysis of the questionnaire showed that the questionnaire was significantly reliable ($\alpha = 0.83$).

The questionnaire was also analyzed in terms of wording. Two open-ended questions, q15 and q16 were reworded in order to avoid ambiguity in meaning. Q17 originally worded as “What kinds of things do you like writing about?” was reworded as “What topics do you like writing about?”. Q18 originally worded as “What are the most important things you have learned about composition?” was adapted as “In your opinion, what are the most important things which must be taken into consideration while writing a composition?”. As a result of this analysis, Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire consisting of 20 questions was ready to be used.

In the second week of October 2008, the first writing task (descriptive essay, see Appendix B), was piloted on 41 students from the 10th classes other than the language class. It was seen that most of the students had problems in understanding the language in the task. Therefore, the researcher had to explain the task to them in Turkish. When the compositions were read, it was seen that most of the students were unable to write a meaningful, well organized descriptive essay consisting of 100 words.

On the same day - October 14th, 2008 - the reflection letter on essay was piloted with the same forty-one students right after they wrote the first writing task (descriptive essay). The reflection letter about essay had been prepared in Turkish because most of the students at the school were not capable of understanding and answering the questions in English. The wording of the questions in the reflection letter was clear. Therefore, the students in the pilot study had no difficulty in answering it. The first reflection letter consisted of six questions. Upon analyzing students’ answers and discussing with the thesis adviser, the researcher realised the need to add some more questions to the reflection letter in order to elicit

information about the participants' writing process, the drafts and the improvement of the composition around the drafts. The questions numbered q1, q5 and q6 were respectively worded as 'What were the most important things you considered while writing this composition? How many times did you write this composition until you reached the final draft? How did your composition evolve around the drafts (what changes did you do in each draft? why did you need these changes?)' were added to the reflection letter about essay. Thus, the reflection letter about essay (see Appendix C) evolved into its final version including nine questions.

3.4.3 Procedure of the Study

The data were collected in three phases (see Figure 3.1). Firstly, in the first week of October, the Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire, which was developed based on the questionnaires in the book of O'Malley & Valdez Pierce (1996) and Raimes (1987), was piloted.

In the second week of October, a writing task and the reflection letter on essay were piloted with the other students attending the same school in order to see if the students would be able to perform the task, and write a reflection letter about their composition process effectively.

In the third week of October, KET A2 (Reading and Writing Section 2004) was administered to the participants to evaluate their proficiency in reading and writing. In the 4th week of October, students were asked to write three compositions. The researcher preferred to use both standardized test and three different writing tasks to increase the reliability and validity in assessing the students' baseline writing ability. The essays were written in three different lessons in order to measure the students' writing ability more correctly and rated by two raters independently using an analytical scoring rubric, which was adapted from Jacobs et al. (1981 cited in Weigle, 2002) and Sağlam (2005). The inter-rater reliability was assessed by

computing the correlation coefficient. The number of words and the mean t-unit length (MTUL) of the compositions were calculated by the researcher. These four different scores; proficiency scores, writing scores, number of words and mean t-unit length were taken as baseline data of the participants' writing skills.

Second, starting from the 1st week of November 2008, writing instruction was given to the students according to the writing tasks determined on the Schedule of Writing Portfolio (see Appendix F). The tasks had been prepared according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and had been adapted from a Writing Portfolio Project by Järvinen (2004). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages classifies levels as A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2, and determines what learners can do at each level in terms of four skills (listening, reading, speaking and writing). The writings which are expected from an English Language Learner at A2 and B1 level were taken as a base for writing assignments. During the study, the participants were asked to use some forms such as peer evaluation and editing form for writing, self-assessment of writing strategies, and a checklist for writing (see Appendix G, H and I). The researcher had five hours of English with the participants, two hours of it was allotted to writing instruction, peer assessment and teacher mini conferences with the participants. Each writing task in the portfolio was evaluated by the researcher according to an analytical scoring rubric which was adapted from Jacobs et al (1981) and Sağlam (2005) (see Appendix J).

Third, the study was completed one week before the schedule which had been planned, so KET A2 (Reading and Writing Section) was re-administered in the last week of April. In the first week of May, the participants were asked to rewrite three writing tasks (descriptive, narrative and reflective essays) in the classroom. The tasks were read and rated by two English language teachers independently. The arithmetical means of these writings' scores were computed by SPSS. The number of words and the mean length of T-units in the

compositions were counted by the researcher and their arithmetical means were computed again as it had been done at the beginning of the study. The difference between pre and post-study means of these four measures was computed by paired samples T-test. The reflection letters about essay and writing portfolio written by the participants (see Appendix C and D) and the transcripts of the focus group interview were analyzed by content analysis to reveal students' self-evaluation of the improvement in their writing skills and opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills.

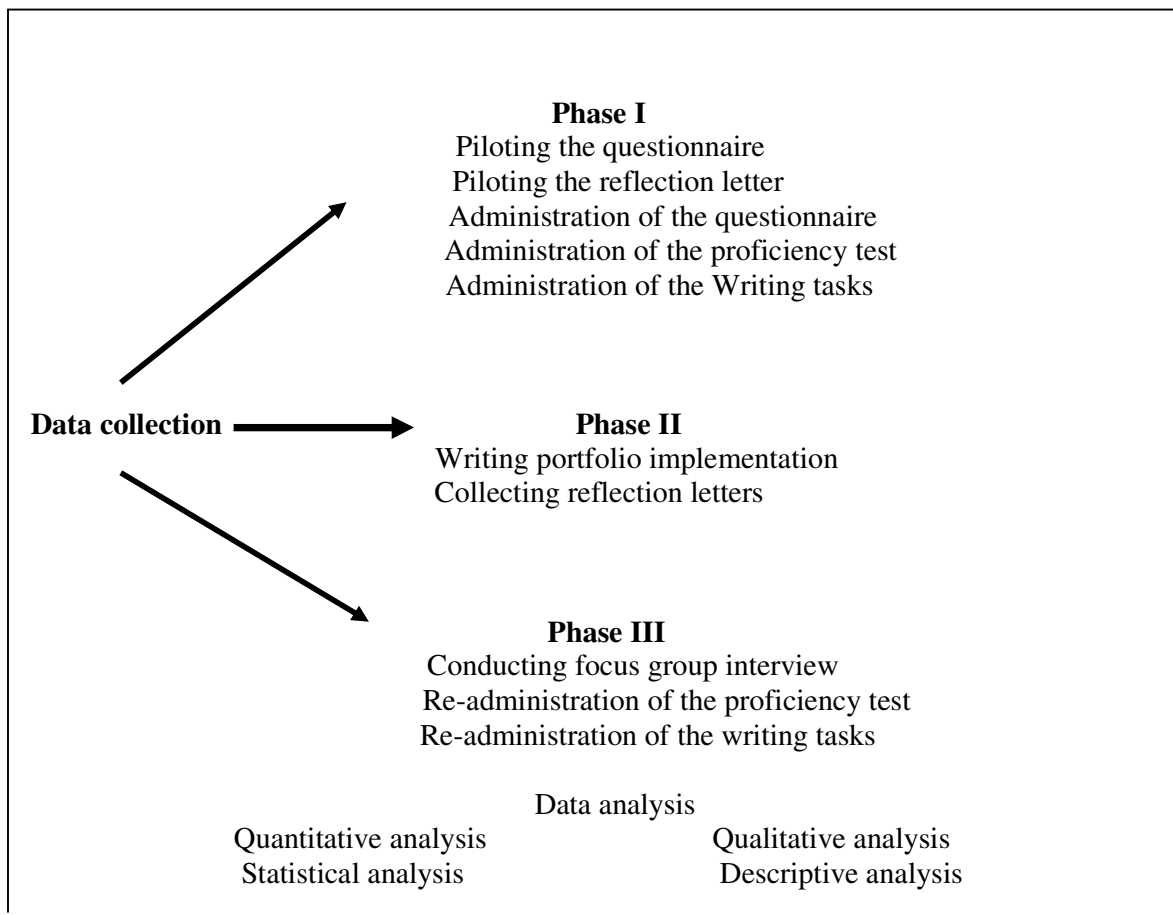


Figure 3.1 Procedure of the Study

3.5 Data Analysis

Content analysis (Bordens and Abbott, 2002) was used to analyze qualitative data collected through reflection letters, focus group interview and open-ended questions of the Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire. Similar responses of the participants to a particular question were coded under the same category.

Content analysis was selected as an analysis method because it is frequently used in social sciences to analyze qualitative data such as interviews and focus groups. Open-ended interviews and focus groups allow participants to express themselves freely, in their own words. Content analysis enables researchers to reveal participants' own terms.

Paired samples T-test and correlations were computed by means of SPSS (11.5) in order to answer the second and third research questions, respectively worded as 'What is the effect of writing portfolio on the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?' and 'Is there a relationship between the four different measures of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?'. SPSS (11.5) was also used to compute the frequencies of the responses given to the sixteen Likert-scale questions of the Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire, which was used to investigate the first research question worded as 'What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' interest in and awareness of writing in English?'

3.6 Summary

The chapter has presented the methodology of the study. The research questions, the instruments and the relevant data analyses of the study are summarized in the figure on the next page (see Figure 3.2).

Research Questions	Instruments	Data Analyses
1. What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' interest in and awareness of writing in English?	Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire (WIAQ) Focus Group Interview	Descriptive Statistics Content Analysis
2. What is the effect of writing portfolios on the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?	Writing Portfolio Pre and post tests Writing Tasks of IEA Study Reflection Letter on Essay	Inferential Statistics Content Analysis
3. Is there a relationship between the four different measures of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?	Standardized Test Writing Samples Number of Words MTUL	Pearson-Product Moment Correlation SPSS
4. What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' opinions regarding the use of portfolios for improving writing skills?	Reflection Letter on Writing Portfolio Focus Group Interview	Content Analysis

Figure 3.2 Overview of the Methodology

CHAPTER IV

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Results of Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire

The questionnaire was administered to the twenty-seven students at the beginning of the study and analyzed by SPSS. For the analysis of the questionnaire, the scores 1= Never and 2= Rarely were accepted as negative values whereas the scores 4= Often and 5= Always were accepted as positive values and 3= Sometimes was considered neither positive nor negative. Besides, frequencies and arithmetical means of the frequencies for the questions in the same group were computed in order to investigate the tenth grade Turkish state school students' interest in and awareness of writing in English. The results were as follows (see Table 4.1.1):

The first item worded as 'I like to write compositions in English' showed that 56 % of the participants (7,4 % never, 48, 1 % rarely) seemed not to like to write compositions in English and 41 % of the participants sometimes liked to write compositions in English while only 4 % of the participants always liked to write compositions in English.

Analysis of the fourth item worded as 'It is enjoyable to write compositions in English.' showed that while 19 % of the participants seemed not to enjoy writing compositions in English (3, 7 % never, 14, 8 % rarely) while 41 % of the participants sometimes and 41 % of them seemed to enjoy writing in English most of the time (15 % often and 26 % always).

Analysis of the ninth item worded as 'At home, I do writing homework in English.' showed that 34 % of the participants (4 % never, 30 % rarely) seemed not to do writing homework in English at home while 37 % of the participants sometimes and 30 % of them (11 % often and 19 % always) did writing homework at home most of the time.

The responses given to the second question worded as 'I am good at writing compositions in English' showed that 30 % of the participants (11 % never, 19 % rarely) seemed not to have self-confidence in writing in English whereas 52 % of the participants sometimes and 19

% of them (15 % often and 4 % always) most of the time had self-confidence in writing compositions in English.

The third item worded as 'For me, it is easy to write compositions in English' showed that 29 % of the participants (7 % never; for 22 % rarely) seemed not to have self-confidence in writing in English while 48 % of the participants sometimes and 22 % of them (7 % often and 15 % always) most of the time found it easy to write compositions in English.

Analysis of the fifth item worded as 'I learn better when I write' showed that 81 % of the participants seemed to be aware of the help of writing in learning most of the time while 11 % of them was sometimes aware of it and only 7 % of them was unaware of the help of writing in learning.

Analysis of the sixth item worded as 'I ask my friends to read my compositions in English lessons' showed that 59 % of the participants (33 % never and 26 % rarely) seemed not to ask their friends to read their compositions in English while it seemed that 19 % of them sometimes and 22 % of them (15 % often and 7 % always) most of the time ask their friends to read their compositions.

The result of the eight item worded as 'I get feedback from my peers about my compositions in English lessons' showed that 63 % of the participants (33 % never and 30 % rarely) seemed not to get feedback from their peers about their compositions in English while it seemed that 22 % of them sometimes and 14 % of them (7 % often and 7 % always) most of the time get feedback from their peers about their compositions.

Analysis of the eleventh item entitled as 'I find it useful to get feedback from my peers about my compositions in English lessons' showed that 60 % of the participants (19 % never, 41 % rarely) seemed not to find it useful to get feedback from their peers about their compositions in English lessons while it seemed that 4 % of them sometimes and 37 % of

them (30 % often and 7 % always) most of the time find it useful to receive feedback from their peers.

Analysis of the seventh item worded as 'I find it useful to get feedback from my English language teachers about the content of my compositions' showed that 23 % of the participants seemed not to find it useful while it seemed that 37 % of them sometimes and 40 % of them (7 % often and 33 % always) most of the time find it useful to get feedback from their English language teachers about the content of their compositions. And the analysis of the sixteenth item entitled as 'In English lessons, I find it useful to get feedback from my English language teachers about the mistakes in my compositions' showed that only 15 % of the participants seemed not to find it useful to get teacher feedback about the mistakes in their compositions while it seemed that 26 % of the participants sometimes and 60 % of them (19 % often, 41 % always) most of the time find it useful to get teacher feedback about the mistakes in their compositions.

The responses given to the tenth item worded as 'I get feedback from my English language teachers about the content of my compositions' showed that 52 % of the participants (11 % never, 41 % rarely) seemed not to get feedback from their English language teachers about the content of their compositions while it seemed that 22 % of them sometimes and 26 % of them (15 % often and 11 % always) most of the time receive feedback from their teachers about the content of their compositions.

The responses given to the twelfth item worded as 'In English lessons, I get feedback from my English language teachers about the mistakes in my compositions' showed that 37 % of the participants (7 % never, 30 % rarely) seemed not to receive feedback from their English language teachers about the mistakes in their compositions while it seemed that 33 % of them sometimes and 30 % of them (15 % often and 15 % always) most of the time receive feedback from their teachers about the mistakes in their compositions in English lessons.

The responses given to the thirteenth item entitled as 'I rewrite my compositions correcting the mistakes underlined by my English language teacher' suggested that 34 % of the participants (7 % never, 30 % rarely) seemed not to rewrite their compositions correcting the mistakes underlined by their English language teachers while it seemed that 15 % of them sometimes and 52 % of them (22 % often and 30 % always) most of the time rewrite their compositions correcting the mistakes underlined by their English language teachers.

Analysis of the fourteenth item worded as 'I revise my compositions a few times in English lessons' showed that 22 % of the participants (7 % never, 15 % rarely) seemed not to revise their compositions a few times in English lessons while it seemed that 41 % of them sometimes and 37 % of them (22 % often and 15 % always) most of the time revise their compositions a few times in English lessons.

Analysis of the fifteenth item worded as 'In English lessons, I write my compositions a few times until I reach the best one' showed that 22 % of the participants (7 % never, 15 % rarely) seemed not to write their compositions a few times until they reach the best one in English lessons while it seemed that 26 % of them sometimes and 52 % of them (30 % often, 22 % always) most of the time write their compositions a few times until they reach the best one in English lessons.

After the above-mentioned analysis of each question, arithmetical means of the frequencies for the items in the same group were calculated by means of SPSS. The table 4.1.1 gives the results of the grouped items on the next page. According the table, it seems that most of the participants had low enjoyment of writing in English before the study. Likewise, most of them had low self-confidence in writing in English. However, most of them had a high awareness of the help of writing in English. Moreover, most of them had a low awareness of receiving peer feedback. Similarly, most of them had a low awareness of the usefulness of peer feedback in writing in English. Likewise, most of them had a low awareness of doing writing

homework at home. In addition, most of them had a low awareness of receiving teacher feedback while writing in English. However, half of the participants had a high awareness of the usefulness of teacher feedback whereas half of them had a low awareness. Finally, 53 % of the participants had a low awareness of drafting and revising in writing in English before the writing portfolio study.

Table 4.1.1 Analysis of writing interest and awareness questionnaire

Groups of Items	Negative	Sometimes	Positive
1. Enjoyment of writing in English	38 %	41 %	23 %
2. Self-confidence in writing in English	30 %	50 %	21 %
3. Awareness of the help of writing in learning	7 %	11 %	81 %
4. Awareness of receiving peer feedback	61 %	21 %	18 %
5. Awareness of the usefulness of peer feedback	60 %	4 %	37 %
6. Awareness of doing writing homework at home	34 %	37 %	30 %
7. Awareness of receiving teacher feedback	45 %	28 %	28 %
8. Awareness of the usefulness of teacher feedback	19 %	32 %	50 %
9. Awareness of drafting and revising	26 %	27 %	47 %

The analysis of the open-ended four questions provided the following results:

The responses given to the seventeenth question worded as “What topics do you like writing about?” were coded under 5 categories and showed that the participants liked writing about themselves most. The category ‘About myself’ was stated by 10 students out of 27. The second category following this was ‘General topics’ and the third frequently stated category was ‘School work’; for example, revising for a lesson or studying English. The categories ‘My favorites’ and ‘Emotions’ were equally stated by the participants (see Table 4.1.2). It was

seen that the participants tended to write about the topics which were interesting or important to them as cited by Grabe and Kaplan (1996). They tended to do meaningful writing.

Table 4.1.2 Participants' topics of writing

Categories for topics of writing	Responses	Definitions
About myself	10	my dreams, hobbies, daily life, family, etc.
School work	6	topics chosen by the teacher such as; revision for a lesson, old sayings, historical places.
Emotions	5	Love, happiness, excitement, fear, liking
My favorites	5	Celebrities, famous people, films.
General topics	9	Daily subjects, nature, life, children, sports, Cars, humans' responsibilities
Total	35 / 27 cases	

The answers given to the eighteenth question worded as 'In your opinion, what are the most important things which must be considered while writing a composition?' were coded under 5 categories. The most frequently stated category was 'Mechanics' with 23 responses. The second frequently stated category was 'Organization' with 12 responses. The categories 'Content' and 'Language use' were stated by 7 participants out of 27. The least stated category was the 'Vocabulary' with four responses (see Table 4.1.3 on the next page). The result suggested that the participants' responses depended on their experience with first language writing, because when they started to write compositions for the portfolio study, vocabulary, language use and organization emerged as the most important things they took into consideration and tried to achieve while writing their compositions.

Table 4.1.3 The most important things to be considered in writing

Categories	Responses	Definitions
Mechanics	23	Margins, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, handwriting
Organization	12	Introductory, developmental paragraphs, conclusion title, coherence and cohesion
Content	7	taking reader's interest, expressing the topic with examples
Language/use	7	Grammar rules, sentence structure, grammatical sentences
Vocabulary	4	Vocabulary choice,
Total	53 / 27 cases	

The responses given to the nineteenth and twentieth items which were designed to enable the participants to self-evaluate their writing skills in English and respectively worded as “What do you think you are good at while writing compositions in English (for example; vocabulary, fluency, organization, making grammatically correct sentences and strong command of English etc.)?” and ‘What do you think your weaknesses are in writing in English?’ showed that ‘language use’ and ‘vocabulary’ were the major weaknesses of the participants in writing compositions in English (see Table 4.1.4 on the next page for the details). Six of the participants reported that they couldn’t self-evaluate their weaknesses in writing in English because they had never written a composition before while ten of them stated that they cannot evaluate their strengths because they had written just a few compositions in English before. The result was consistent with the results of the pilot study and focus group interview. Most of the students (41) in the pilot study had stated in their reflection letters that they could not write a well organized description of them due to insufficient vocabulary knowledge and not being able to make sentences in English.

Table 4.1.4 Self-assessment of writing skills

Categories for self-evaluation	Strengths	Weaknesses	Definitions
Content	3	-	I know the topic well, I choose interesting topics, I explain the topic with specific examples
Language Use	4	11	I have strong command of English, I do not make any grammatical mistakes, I express my ideas well
Organization	5	2	introductory, concluding paragraphs, writing about one topic in each paragraph, stating events clearly
Vocabulary	2	11	a wide variety of vocabulary
Mechanics	2	1	Neat handwriting and spelling
No evaluation	10	6	I cannot evaluate my writing skills because I have never written a composition before or I have written just a few compositions in English before
Total	26	31	
27 cases			

4.2 Intra and Inter-rater Reliability of the Qualitative Data

After the open-ended questions of Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire were analyzed by the researcher, intra and inter-coder reliability coefficients were calculated according to the formula provided by Young (1996, cited in Özek, 2000). To calculate intra and inter-coder reliability coefficients, 20 % of the completed questionnaires by the participants, only 5 questionnaires, were selected randomly.

First, intra-coder reliability was calculated. The following formula in which R represents the researcher herself was used.

No of categories coded the same by R in the 1st and 2nd codings

No of categories coded by the R in the first coding

In the first coding, which was performed on May 1st, 2009, 30 categories were identified by the researcher. In the second coding, which was conducted on May 25th, 2009, 26 categories were identified by the researcher, 26 of which were identical to the ones identified in the first coding. Thus, correlation co-efficient was found to be 0.86. This suggested that the two codings conducted by the researcher were highly consistent with each other.

To calculate the inter-coder reliability coefficient, the formula below was used in which R was the researcher herself, Y was the coder Y and H was the coder H:

(No of categories coded the same by R&Y+ No of categories coded the same by R&H)/2

No of categories coded by R

The adviser and a colleague of the researcher kindly accepted to help the researcher as the external coders for the categorization of the open-ended questions of the Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire. However, the colleague of the researcher coded the results separately due to some misunderstanding before the researcher had a chance to train her in the coding of these qualitative data. Fortunately, it did not affect the coding process negatively. Both the researcher and her colleague understood how important the training was before

independent coding. Coder I identified 32 categories, 25 of which were identical to the researcher's categories in the first coding; while coder Y identified 28 categories, 22 of which were identical to the researcher's first coding. Thus, the inter-coder reliability coefficient was found to be 0.78. It indicated a significant consistency between the codings of the researcher and the external coders.

4.3 Analysis of the Quantitative Data

As it is shown in the table below, the participants' proficiency scores were measured out of 60 because the KET test's only reading and writing section was used. In addition, the table shows that most of the participants' scores were low at the beginning of the study. The lowest writing score was 16 whereas the highest one was 94 out of one hundred. The lowest proficiency score was 9 while the highest one was 50 (out of 60) (see Table 4.3.1).

Table 4.3.1 Participants' pre-study scores

Participants	Proficiency Scores (out of 60)	Writing Scores (out of 100)	Number of words	MTUL
1 st Male (M)	16	25	52	5.32
2 nd Female (F)	22	23	26	5.60
3 rd F	50	94	275	8.37
4 th F	15	25	50	6.87
5 th F	26	50	78	6.04
6 th F	31	55	105	8.53
7 th F	15	28	70	4.17
8 th F	14	31	104	5.96
9 th M	9	16	44	4.90
10 th M	13	18	47	5.27
11 th F	35	79	210	6.41
12 th F	29	60	120	5.76
13 th F	15	38	79	4.73
14 th F	12	27	25	4.95
15 th F	35	55	101	8.10
16 th M	28	58	106	6.68
17 th F	15	28	57	5.63
18 th F	20	29	28	5.57
19 th M	42	80	192	7.54
20 th M	16	33	78	5.46

The table below shows that most of the participants increased their proficiency scores and writing scores after the study. The number of words and mean t-unit length of their compositions also increased after writing portfolio. The lowest writing score increased to 18 while the highest one rose up to 98 out of 100. And the lowest proficiency score was 13 whereas the highest one rose to 55 out of 60 (see Table 4.3.2).

Table 4.3.2 Participants' post-study scores

Participants	Proficiency Scores (out of 60)	Writing Scores (out of 100)	Number of Words	MTUL
1 st Male (M)	18	80	120	6.85
2 nd Female (F)	38	76	150	7.94
3 rd F	55	98	282	8.30
4 th F	14	55	88	6.56
5 th F	38	84	186	7.20
6 th F	49	82	206	8.40
7 th F	16	78	184	7.61
8 th F	34	79	236	6.68
9 th M	15	18	104	5.02
10 th M	23	32	121	6.44
11 th F	47	83	239	7.06
12 th F	45	82	235	8.13
13 th F	25	58	99	5.27
14 th F	17	30	52	6.02
15 th F	45	82	247	7.31
16 th M	37	52	176	7.36
17 th F	17	41	97	5.69
18 th F	37	84	108	7.95
19 th M	42	88	165	9.27
20 th M	13	65	122	6.19

The correlations between the four measures of the participants' writing skills- writing scores, proficiency scores, number of words and MTUL- were calculated both before and after the portfolio as in the study of Thomas and Donlan (1980) (see Tables 4.3.3 and 4.3.4). Pearson product moment correlation co-efficient was computed to assess the correlations between these four measures. The correlations between these four different measures of

writing skills were found to be statistically significant and large (more than 0.50) (Cohen, 1988) as it was found in the studies by Breland et al (1987), Isaacson (1988), Fotos (1991), and Camp (1993).

As it is seen in the following table, the highest correlation ($r=0.95$) was between the quality of the participants' writing samples and proficiency scores whereas the lowest correlation ($r=.63$) was observed between the Number of Words and MTUL because some participants' words in the compositions did not form T-units, that is, there was no subject or predicate in their sentences. They wrote a bunch of words, but these words did not form grammatically correct sentences and T-units.

Table 4.3.3 Correlations of pre-study scores

Scores	Proficiency	Writing	Number of Words	MTUL
Proficiency	1	.95**	.86**	.80**
Writing	.95**	1	.93**	.71**
Number of Words	.86**	.93**	1	.63**
MTUL	.80**	.71**	.63**	1

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

The table on the next page (Table 4.3.4) demonstrates that the correlations between these four measures of the participants' writing skills were still significant and large after the study although decrease in them was observed. The highest correlation was between Proficiency scores and the Number of Words ($r=0.80$) while the lowest one was again observed between MTUL and the Number of Words ($r=0.59$). Besides, the correlation between the participants' Writing scores (quality of the participants' writing samples) and Proficiency scores decreased from ($r=0.95$) to ($r=0.69$). It suggested that writing portfolio's effect on the quality of the

participants' writing samples was more than its effect on the participants' proficiency scores. And this finding might compensate for the lack of control group in this study.

Table 4.3.4 Correlations of post-study scores

Post-Scores	Proficiency	Writing	Number of Words	MTUL
Proficiency	1	.69**	.80**	.73**
Writing	.69**	1	.70**	.78**
Number of Words	.80**	.70**	1	.59**
MTUL	.73**	.78**	.59**	1

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

Inferential statistics was used to answer the second research question entitled as 'What is the effect of writing portfolios on the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?'. Paired samples T-test revealed that there was a statistically significant difference between the participants' pre and post-study assessments (see Table 4.3.5) in terms proficiency Scores ($p < .0005$), writing Scores ($p < .0005$), MTUL ($p < .001$) and the number of words they used in the compositions ($p < .0005$).

Table 4.3.5 Results of paired samples T-test

	Pre-study		Post-study		T-test		
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	df	t	p
Writing Scores	42.51	22.63	67.42	22.52	19	-5.657	.000
Proficiency Scores	22.90	11.18	31.25	13.77	19	-5.412	.000
MTUL	6.09	1.24	7.07	1.10	19	-4.075	.001
Number of words	92.48	65.53	160.98	64.28	19	-6.599	.000

$p < .0005$ for Writing Scores, Proficiency Scores and Number of words

$p < .001$ for MTUL

Based on the findings above, it was inferred that writing portfolios were a very effective tool for improving the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills.

4.4 Inter-rater Reliability of the Quantitative Data

The essays (three timed writing tasks, see Appendix B) written before and after the writing portfolio were independently rated by two readers in order to assure reliability in assessment. The two raters came together and worked on the rating rubric and reached a common understanding about scoring. In order to assess the raters' agreement on the quality of compositions, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was calculated as suggested by Weigle (2002) as a simplistic way of assessing reliability of scoring. Before the portfolio, the correlation coefficient between the writing scores given by the two raters was .996. After the portfolio, the correlation coefficient between the raters' scores was .938. Thus, the reliability in scoring was achieved.

4.5 Analysis of the Reflection Letters about Writing Portfolio

Analysis of the reflection letters about writing portfolio (see Appendix D) revealed the following results: nineteen participants out of twenty stated that writing portfolio helped them to improve their EFL writing skills, only one student had a negative opinion. She felt that writing portfolio did not help her to improve her writing skills in English a lot although she showed great improvement in her writing scores (pre-study 55, post-study 82), proficiency scores (pre-study 35, post-study 45) and the number of words she used in the compositions (pre-study 101, post-study 247).

The second question in the letter was about the writing skills the participants improved with the help of writing portfolio. Regarding the question, all the participants reported some skills they improved such as: *vocabulary knowledge, language use and organization* (see Table 4.5.1 for details). As it is seen in the following table, language use and vocabulary were the sub-skills which were mentioned by the participants the most. The result indicated that

writing portfolio lead the participants to self-assess their writing skills through reflection letters, which made them aware of what they had learned. However, it was interesting that strategies of writing such as soliciting teacher or peer feedback and generating ideas, which are stated by Brown (2000:p.343) among the micro-skills for the production of writing, were not reported by the participants among the skills they developed. It can be interpreted as another indicator of a long tradition of product-oriented instruction of writing.

Table 4.5.1 Categories for improved writing skills after the portfolio

Categories for improved skills	Responses	Definitions
Vocabulary	15	learning lots of new words Less vocabulary mistakes now,
Language Use	22	less grammatical errors, improvement in grammar knowledge, expressing myself better now, making sentences easily
Organizing my ideas	8	Organizing my ideas better, new conjunctions
Spelling	1	making less spelling mistakes now
Total	46/20cases	

Regarding the question three worded as ‘Do you think that writing portfolio is a useful tool for improving writing skills?’, all the participants, except for one, thought that writing portfolio was a useful tool for improving writing skills (see Table 4.5.2). Although she stated that writing portfolio did not help her very much to improve her writing skills, there was a substantial increase in her proficiency score, writing score and the number of words at the end of the study in comparison to her pre-portfolio scores.

Table 4.5.2 Usefulness of writing portfolios

Categories	Responses	Definitions
Useful	19	Writing portfolio is useful for improving writing skills.
Not useful	1	It did not help me very much
Total	20 cases	

Some of the participants who stated that writing portfolio was a useful tool explained their reasons as follows:

____ *“Yes, it is a useful technique. I did not have any idea about the rules which must be considered while writing a composition in English before the portfolio”.*

____ *“I think it is a useful technique because it was under the teacher’s control and each mistake was corrected without being ignored”.*

____ *“Yes, it is useful because I saw my mistakes and I corrected them writing again and again”.*

____ *“It is useful because I corrected the mistakes which I made in the 1st draft in the 2nd and 3rd drafts”.*

The question four worded as ‘Do you think that it is necessary to keep a writing portfolio for improving writing skills?’ revealed that eleven participants believed the necessity of writing portfolios for improving writing skills, whereas 6 participants did not believe the necessity of writing portfolios for improving writing skills. Three of them had not answered the question. One participant who believed the necessity of writing portfolios for improving writing skills explained her reason saying that:

“Yes, it is necessary to keep a writing portfolio to improve writing skills because we can improve our skills only when we keep on writing”.

One of the participants who did not believe the necessity of portfolio for improving writing skills explained her feelings as follows:

“I was fed up with writing compositions and reflection letters and I started not to like English during the study.”

Table 4.5.3 Necessity of writing portfolios for improving writing skills

Categories	Responses	Definitions
Necessary	11	Writing portfolio is necessary to improve writing skills
Not necessary	6	It is not necessary
Total	17 / 20 cases	

With regard to the question five worded “Did you have any difficulties during the writing portfolio?” four participants within the sample stated that they had no difficulty. However, eleven of them stated that language use became a problem for them (see Table 4.5.4 for details). This was another indicator that the participants had to keep on writing compositions to overcome the problem of language use.

Table 4.5.4 Difficulties the participants had during writing portfolio study

Categories for Difficulties	Responses	Definitions
Language use	11	Difficulty in making sentences, expressing my ideas in English, making semantically correct sentences, Insufficient grammar knowledge
Vocabulary	2	Insufficient vocabulary knowledge
Content	2	I had difficulty in findings topics, new ideas, examples
Organization	1	I had difficulty in making beginning, middle and ending
Mechanics	3	I had difficulty in spelling, punctuation
Total	19 / 20 cases	

The last question in the reflection letter was about the composition the participants liked most in their writing portfolio. Only one student stated that s/he liked all of them without giving any reasons. The rest of them gave the following answers (see Table 4.5.5). The table shows that writing portfolio made the participants feel pride, ownership and fun as it was stated by Manning (2000) and (Mills-Courts & Amiran, 1991). Besides, the writings in the portfolio were meaningful to them as it is stated by (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

Some of the participants were proud of their compositions because they thought they were good compositions, they were written well according to the rules for composing. Some liked their compositions because they were about a first time in their lives. Some of the participants liked their compositions because they used the newly learned sentence structures. It was obvious that the participants were proud of their compositions because they were their products, results of their intensive mental efforts. Comparison and contrast essay and argumentative essay were stated more than the other two essays as the participants' favorite essays in the portfolio because they enabled the participants to learn and use new sentence structures. It was also another indicator of the participants' increasing awareness of their learning process.

Table 4.5.5 Participants' favorite compositions in their portfolios

Categories for Compositions	Responses	Definitions
Descriptive	2	a good composition, fun
Narrative	3	a first time in my life, content
Argumentative	5	Language use
Comparison and Contrast	9	using new sentence structures
Total	19 / 20 cases	

4.6 Results of Focus Group Interview

At the end of the study, a focus group interview was carried out with ten students. The aim was to cross-check some data which were gathered by Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire and to have an insight about the participants' understanding of writing portfolio technique, and to learn the participants' opinions regarding the use of writing portfolio for improving writing skills and its effect on their writing skills. The interview was a semi-structured one and designed in a way that 50 % of the male and female participants could be represented. A list of girls and boys were formed and seven of girls and three of boys were

selected randomly. Thus, three groups were formed. Two groups consisted of three students and one group consisted of four students. In each group, there was one male student.

Six questions prepared beforehand (see Appendix E for the questions) were asked at the interview. Some additional questions were asked in reaction to the interviewees' responses to the question four. The results by questions were presented below.

Analysis of the first item worded as 'What topics do you like writing about?' showed that 9 participants liked writing about themselves on the topics such as their dreams, memories, hobbies and families while only one of them reported that he liked writing about famous people. The result confirmed the data gathered through the questionnaire.

The second question was about the weaknesses of the participants in writing in English at the beginning of the study. 9 of the interviewees reported that language use was the major problem for them. They listed the following weaknesses in terms of language use: Insufficient grammar knowledge such as tenses, they did not know how to make long sentences combining two sentences and they had difficulty in making sentences in English. And for nine of them, insufficient vocabulary knowledge was the second major problem. Only one interviewee stated that she knew limited number of conjunctions at the beginning of the study. However, she did not have any difficulties in grammar and vocabulary.

In response to the third question worded as 'Did writing portfolio help you to improve your weaknesses in writing in English? How?', all the interviewees stated:

“Yes, it helped us to improve our weaknesses in writing in English.”

And they elucidated their opinions as in the following quotations:

____ ***“I learned new conjunctions to connect the paragraphs.”***

____ ***“I learned the agreement of tenses and new vocabulary. I learned how to make good sentences. Now I can make long sentences instead of***

short ones. It was a challenge for me to write long sentences during the portfolio.”

____ *“I used to make many grammatical mistakes, now I make less grammatical mistakes. Now I am able to write lots of things about myself and my personality. However, I did not write before. I learned new conjunctions and used them in my compositions.”*

____ *“I saw my grammatical mistakes, even my punctuation mistakes three times and corrected them. Now I can make sentences more easily. I learned new words, tenses and connectors.”*

____ *“I had difficulty in making sentences before. But now, with the help of these compositions I can make sentences very easily. In the previous years, I got bored very quickly while writing because I could not write. During the portfolio study I did not feel bored. It was enjoyable for me because I could write.”*

____ *“For example, I would make mistakes in the first draft and could not choose the right words. I saw in the second draft that the word I used was wrong and changed the word. So, I learned to choose the right word and to write it in the right place in the sentence. In addition, I learned to use conjunctions and my compositions became more fluent and impressive.”*

The interviewees’ responses to the fourth question worded as ‘In your opinion, what is a writing portfolio? What did you do with your teacher while you were keeping your writing portfolio?’ caused the researcher to ask some additional questions in reaction to the participants’ responses. Thus, the analysis of the responses showed that none of the interviewees had kept a writing portfolio before. Two of them had never written a composition in English before. Five of them stated that they used to write two compositions a

year at most while three of them reported that they used to write four compositions in English a year at most. Only three of them had experienced receiving written teacher feedback about their composition papers before. Five of the interviewees stated that they used to receive oral teacher feedback about their compositions and their composition papers were not distributed back. In addition to these, they had never experienced receiving or giving peer feedback about their compositions in English lessons. And none of them had experienced writing the same composition in several drafts receiving peer or teacher feedback between drafts in English lessons before.

The interviewees defined writing portfolio technique and described what they did together with their teacher while keeping their portfolios as in the following quotations:

_____ **“To me, writing portfolio is to write compositions during a year and keep them in a file. We wrote the compositions three times and every time we handed them in to the teacher. She underlined our mistakes in the compositions and suggested ideas or alternatives to improve our compositions, which I had never seen my mistakes on my composition paper before and I had never been asked to write it again correcting the mistakes.”**

_____ **“In my opinion, writing portfolio is to write a lot of compositions during a year and I had not written so many compositions in English before. I started to write compositions in English in the eight grade and we used to write two compositions a year at most.”**

_____ **“You gave us forms. I checked my compositions using them, which I had not used them before.”**

_____ **“We shared our compositions with our classmates in English lessons and we tried to evaluate each other’s compositions using a form including questions, which I had not done it before.”**

_____ **“We submitted a reflection letter to you together with the final drafts of our compositions and you rated our final drafts.”**

_____ **“We wrote reflection letters and submitted them to you together with the final draft of our composition. In those letters, there were questions prepared by you and we tried to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of our compositions answering them.”**

_____ **“You brought sample texts and essays to the classroom. We read them and learned the words, sentence structures and tenses in them altogether in the classroom.”**

In response to the fifth question worded as ‘What difficulties did you have while you were keeping your writing portfolio?’, all the interviewees reported that finding ideas, making sentences and finding the right words and using a wide range of words were the difficulties they experienced while they were keeping their portfolios.

In response to the sixth item worded as ‘Do you think that it is a must to keep a writing portfolio for improving writing skills in English?’ Why / Why not?’, all of the interviewees stated:

_____ ***“Yes, it is a must to keep a writing portfolio for improving writing skills in English”.***

And they explained their reasons as in the following quotations:

_____ ***“because we not only corrected our mistakes but also learned new things while writing the same composition three times.”***

____ *“because writing portfolio provided us with lots of opportunities to practise writing in English.”*

____ *“because taking teacher feedback helped us to notice our mistakes. I think it was nearly impossible to realize our mistakes without teacher feedback”.*

____ *“We kept the words and sentence structures in our mind better since we wrote them three times.”*

____ *“Due to the writing portfolio, we concentrated on writing in English.*

4.7 Analysis of the Reflection Letters about Essays

The reflection letter about essay (see Appendix C) gave the participants opportunity to ponder about the process of writing they went through. In their letters, the participants reflected on the most important things they took into consideration while writing their essays, what they strove to achieve while writing their essays and what they did to achieve their objectives.

In addition, the reflection letters made the participants assess the progress of their essays around the drafts, strengths and weaknesses of their essays and asked them to make suggestions to improve the weaknesses of their essays. The participants wrote four reflection letters about four essays; descriptive, narrative, argumentative, and comparison and contrast during the study respectively. It should be noted that each reflection letter was written by the participants after having completed at least three drafts of the writing assignment, which lasted a month for most of them. Each reflection letter on essay was separately analyzed first. And then, the common points of the results were documented as follows:

After analyzing the participants’ reflection letters about four essays, it was observed that the question one entitled as ‘What were the most important things you considered while

writing this composition?’, and the question two worded as ‘What did you strive to achieve while writing this composition?’ were interpreted in the same way by the participants and similar responses were given to these questions. Therefore, they were categorized together under the heading ‘The most important things to be considered while writing an essay’. The following categories of micro-skills for writing such as *vocabulary*, *organization* and *language use* emerged (see Table 4.7.1 for details).

As it is seen in the following table, *organization* and *language use* were as frequently stated as *mechanics* by the participants. However, in the Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire, which had been completed by the participants at the beginning of the study, *mechanics* had been the most important thing the participants considered while writing a composition since it had been mentioned 23 times by the participants. The result suggested that the writing portfolio gave the participants lots of opportunities to practise writing in English, so it heightened their awareness of the things to be considered while writing a composition in English.

Table 4.7.1 Things to be considered while writing a composition in English

Categories	Responses	Definitions
Organization	17	introductory, developmental paragraphs, conclusion, coherence and cohesion
Language use	14	Grammar rules, sentence structure, grammatical sentences
Vocabulary	8	A good choice and wide variety of vocabulary
Mechanics	12	margins, punctuation, capitalization, spelling, handwriting
Content	7	Taking reader’s interest, title
Total	58 / 20 cases	

The third question worded as ‘What did you do to achieve your objectives?’ revealed the following strategies (see Table 4.7.2 for details). As the table below shows, the participants developed and used strategies such as studying the sample essays, studying tenses and editing their compositions for grammar. With the help of writing portfolio, the participants raised

their awareness of pre, while and post-writing strategies such as searching different sources, generating ideas for writing, soliciting help from others and editing. So, they developed one of the ‘micro-skills for writing’ which are defined by Brown (2001).

Table 4.7.2 Participants’ writing strategies

Categories for Strategies	Responses	Definitions
Searching	6	different sources, using dictionary
Taking help	3	from the other teachers and friends
Reading	5	short stories
Studying	6	tenses, sentence structures, mistakes in the previous drafts, the prompts in the writing task, sample essays
Vocabulary	4	learning specific words
Stages of writing process	5	generating ideas for writing, rough draft, rereading, revising and editing for grammar
Translating	3	from Turkish to English
Total	32/ 20 cases	

The fourth question which was worded as ‘Did you have any difficulties while writing this composition? If you had, what were they?’ revealed that the most difficult thing was to make grammatically and semantically correct sentences for one third of the participants. This indicated that the students needed to practise writing for writing in English more. Five students stated that they did not have any difficulties writing their essays (see Table 4.7.3 on the next page for details).

Table 4.7.3 Difficulties the participants had while writing the essays

Categories for Difficulties	Responses	Definitions
Language use	9	difficulty in making sentences and using New language structures
No difficulties	5	I did not have any difficulties
Vocabulary	3	A good choice of vocabulary
Mechanics	1	I had difficulty in punctuation, spelling
Content	1	I had difficulty in finding a good topic
Organization	1	Coherence and cohesion
Total	22 / 20 cases	

With respect to the fifth question worded as ‘How many times did you write this composition until you reached the final one?’, analysis of the responses demonstrated that some participants started to repeat the drafts as many as they considered necessary as it is stated by Grabe and Kaplan (1996) as a feature of process writing (see Table 4.7.4 for details). It suggested that some participants’ awareness of the importance of rough drafts increased with the help of writing portfolio.

Table 4.7.4 Number of the drafts

Categories for the number of drafts	Responses
Two times	1
Three times	15
Four times	2
Five times	2
Six times	1
Total	21 / 20 cases

The sixth question worded as ‘How did your composition evolve around drafts? What changes did you make in each draft? Why did you need these changes?’ was designed to elicit information from the participants about the progress of their compositions. It was understood from the responses that all the participants noticed their mistakes in the previous drafts and rewrote their compositions by correcting the mistakes highlighted by the teacher-researcher (see Table 4.7.5 for details). It was promising to observe that some of the participants explained why they needed these changes. Some stated that they wanted to write a flawless, good composition. Some wanted to write a more organized composition whereas some of them just identified the mistakes and explained them in detail without giving reasons why they needed these corrections. Here are a few quotations from the participants’ responses.

_____ *“In the first draft my handwriting was not good, I did not make beginning, middle and ending paragraphs. I had some difficulties in choosing words right. In the second draft, my conclusion was not good. In the third draft I used the tense wrong.”*

_____ *“My composition improved around the drafts. In the first draft, my composition was not formed of four paragraphs. I used “besides” to connect two opposite ideas, but I should have used “in comparison to”. In the second draft I corrected these mistakes. My composition consisted of four paragraphs; introduction, my personality, my brother’s personality and conclusion.”*

_____ *“My teacher underlined the mistakes I made in the first draft. I wrote my composition again correcting these mistakes. In the second draft, I had mistakes related with content, spelling and vocabulary. My teacher explained them all to me individually. I corrected these mistakes.”*

Some of the participants reported the changes they made in their compositions as in the following:

_____ *“In my first draft, the events and paragraphs were not well-organized, I corrected them in the second draft and made up a new plot using new words. In the third draft I went through all the sentences I wrote and I made them clear.”*

_____ *“In my first draft, I talked about two or three ideas in the same paragraph. I corrected this mistake in the second draft. I also changed my title. In my third draft, I strove to do my best.”*

_____ *“I had not used any conjunctions. I added them to my composition, so my paragraphs became more organized.”*

_____ *“I corrected the mistakes highlighted by the teacher in each draft and in the last draft I tried to turn it into a perfect composition.”*

Table 4.7.5 Evolvement of the essays around drafts

Categories for Mistakes	Responses	Definitions
Content	3	lack of title and sufficient information
Mechanics	4	spelling, punctuation
Organization	5	not to use connectors, not to organize paragraphs
Language use	7	grammatical mistakes
Vocabulary	5	incorrect words, lack of specific words
Total	24 / 20 cases	

The seventh question worded as ‘What are the strengths of this composition?’ was designed to make the participants identify the strengths of their compositions. The following categories of strengths appeared (see Table 4.7.6). Content and organization were stated most

by the participants as the strengths of their essays. It was observed that some students did not answer the question.

Table 4.7.6 Strengths of the essays

Categories for Strengths	Responses	Definitions
Content	8	I gave enough information about my friend, it reflects my feelings, it is a real event, it reflects all the components of the task
Organization	4	It is well organized
Language use	3	New sentence structures, grammatically and semantically correct sentences
Vocabulary	2	Using a wide variety of vocabulary
Total	17 / 20 cases	

Some participants explained their opinions about the strengths of their essays as in the following:

____ *“My composition is strong in terms of grammar and new language structures. I like the third paragraph most, because I supported my opinion by giving specific examples there. And I believe that this strengthened my paragraph.”*

_____ *“The facts that I mentioned in the second paragraph are the strength of my composition.”*

_____ *“I stated my purpose well, which is the strength of my composition.”*

_____ *“The content of this composition and the new vocabulary that I used are the strengths of it.”*

The question eight worded as ‘What are the weaknesses of this composition (what do you need to change or improve)?’ was designed to make the participants self-assess the weaknesses of their essays. Some participants stated that their essays had no weaknesses because they corrected each mistake. The following categories for weaknesses emerged (see Table 4.7.7 for details).

Table 4.7.7 Weaknesses of the essays

Categories for Weaknesses	Responses	Definitions
Content	3	I could have given more information
Organization	3	I could have organized it better
No weaknesses	5	I corrected each mistake
Mechanics	1	Punctuation, capitalization
Vocabulary	4	Repeating the same words
Language use	6	Repeating the same sentence structures
Total	22 /20 cases	

Some of the participants explained the weaknesses of their compositions as follows:

_____ *“I feel that I am not good enough at making impressive sentences. I had to repeat the same word a few times. I think I should have changed the first sentence in the introduction.”*

_____ *“I could have written a little longer composition.”*

The analyses of the responses given to the question nine, namely ‘How can you improve these weaknesses?’ demonstrated that all of the participants thought that the weaknesses of the compositions were due to their weaknesses in linguistic competence. Therefore, their answers emphasized the things they had to do in order to develop their linguistic competence in general (see Table 4.7.8 on the next page for details). It was seen that some students did not answer the question.

Table 4.7.8 Suggestions for improving the weaknesses of the essays

Suggestions for Improving Weaknesses	Responses	Definitions
Studying	10	Keep on studying English, grammar and vocabulary, mistakes in the drafts
Writing	3	Keeping on writing, rewriting
Reading	1	Reading English books and dictionaries
Taking help	1	From friends, teachers and family
Searching	1	Other sources such as internet
Imagination	1	Improving imagination
Total	17/ 20 cases	

4.8 Summary

The Chapter IV has just presented the analyses and results of the Writing Interest and Awareness questionnaire, focus group interview and reflection letters on writing portfolio and essay. It has also provided information about the quantitative results of writing portfolio as an intervention strategy and the correlations between the four different measures of the participants' writing skills. The chapter has also presented the results regarding the reliability analyses of both quantitative and qualitative data. The results provided an in-depth understanding about the participants' writing interest and awareness, the effect of writing portfolios on their writing skills and their opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to investigate four research questions; namely, (a) What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' interest in and awareness of writing in English?, (b) What is the effect of writing portfolios on the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?, (c) Is there a relationship between the four measures of the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills? and, (d) What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills?

In relation to the first research question worded as 'What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' interest in and awareness of writing in English?', Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire revealed that at the beginning of the study, only 23 % of the participants most of the time enjoyed writing compositions in English. Only 21 % of them most of the time had self-confidence in writing compositions in English. However, 81 % of them had a high awareness of the help of writing in learning. Only 18 % of the participants had a high awareness of receiving peer feedback. And 60 % of them did not find it useful to receive peer feedback. Only 30 % of the participants had a high awareness of doing writing homework at home. In addition, only 28 % of them most of the time received teacher feedback on their compositions. However, 50 % of them found it useful to receive teacher feedback. Lastly, 47 % of them had a high awareness of drafting and revising their compositions.

Regarding the second research question; namely, "What is the effect of writing portfolios on the tenth grade Turkish EFL students' writing skills?" the study showed that writing portfolios were a very effective tool for improving writing skills based on the statistically significant result of the paired samples T-test. This result was consistent with the result of some studies mentioned in the literature (Sağlam, 2005; Şahinkarakaş, 1998; Agnew, 1995;

Anderson, Mallo, Nee and Wear, 2003; Garcia, Meyer and Walsh, 2002; Kowalewski, Murphy and Starn, 2002).

In addition, the effect of writing portfolio on the participants' writing skills was qualitatively documented by means of reflection letters about essay and writing portfolio, and focus group interview. The participants stated that writing portfolio enabled them to improve their writing skills such as language use (grammar, sentence structure and written expression), vocabulary and organizing ideas. Moreover, reflection letters about essays showed that the participants developed and used a battery of writing strategies while writing their essays in English.

With the help of writing portfolio, the participants experienced process writing in English for the first time. They wrote their essays three times and they received peer and teacher feedback between the drafts in English lessons for the first time. None of them had experienced process writing and kept a writing portfolio before and most of them had never experienced receiving teacher and /or peer feedback in English lessons before.

With respect to the third research question, a statistically significant and large correlation between the four different measures of the participants' writing skills; standardized writing test (proficiency), quality of writing samples, the number of words and mean T-unit length (MTUL) was found both before and after the study. Before the study, the highest correlation ($r=0.95$) was between the quality of the participants' writing samples and proficiency scores whereas the lowest correlation ($r=.63$) was observed between the Number of Words and MTUL. However, the correlation between proficiency scores and writing sample scores decreased from a nearly perfect one (0.95) to a large one (0.69) after the study. It suggested that writing portfolio's effect on the participants' writing samples' quality was more than its effect on the participants' proficiency scores after the intervention. This finding may compensate for the lack of control group in the study.

Concerning the fourth research question worded as ‘What are the tenth grade Turkish EFL students’ opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills?’, the study showed that most of the participants developed positive opinions regarding the use of writing portfolios for improving writing skills. They realized the usefulness and necessity of writing portfolios for improving writing skills and reported that keeping a writing portfolio was a must for improving writing skills. They felt pride and ownership in their portfolios as it is stated by Manning (2000).

The participants had a chance to think about their learning when they wrote their reflection letters about essay and portfolio. Self-reflection also resulted in self-assessment of writing skills. The participants also became aware of their strengths and weaknesses as it is stated by Paulson et al. (1991), Harris (1997), Mills-Courst & Amiran (1991).

Writing portfolio gave the teacher-researcher the opportunity to learn about her students’ knowledge, skills, interests, emotions and opinions as it is stated by Nunes (2004). Through portfolio, instruction and assessment were combined as it is asserted by Paulson et al. (1991). Students not only improved their writing skills in English but also assessed themselves. Both the teacher and the participants had a chance to document and display what they had done during the term of education as it is stated by Wolf (1996, cited in Koçoğlu, 2006).

As a teacher-researcher, I am very glad to experience and realize that I have a very effective tool to help my students improve their writing skills and become active learners as well. I wish to use writing portfolio in my classes from now on and continue to investigate its effects.

5.1 Implications of the Study

In terms of English language teaching practice, the study has the following implications:

First, writing portfolio is a very effective technique in teaching writing, especially for an EFL context like Turkey. Because, the technique makes writing for writing and process writing the focus of the course, and much more attention and effort are put into writing by both the teacher and the students. Therefore, strategies should be developed to establish writing portfolio as a common practice for teaching writing in EFL classrooms in Turkey.

Second, writing portfolios are a very effective tool for improving writing skills of Turkish EFL students as well as meta-cognitive awareness and self-assessment. Turkish EFL teachers at state schools should be encouraged and trained to make writing portfolios an inseparable part of their daily practice of language teaching.

5.2. Limitations of the Study

There are some limitations of the study. The fact that there was not another class who had the same class hours at the school did not make it possible to form a control group. Therefore, the researcher was not able to compare the results gained from the use of writing portfolio. However, the correlations between the four different measures of writing skills which were computed both before and after the portfolio may compensate for the lack of control group in the study.

Second, the limited number of participants in the study may not allow the results to be generalized.

Third, Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire was developed and piloted by the researcher for the purpose of the study. The questionnaire may have some disadvantages or weaknesses; some factors in the questionnaire may not be directly measuring awareness of writing in English. However, it was helpful in this study and can be improved in further studies.

Lastly, most of the participant's English level was not sufficient to express themselves in English. Therefore, the researcher did not ask them to write their reflection letters in English

in order not to make them feel frustrated and get bored of writing at the very beginning of the study. If the participants had been able to write their reflection letters in English as well as their compositions, it would have been more beneficial to them.

5.3. Suggestions for Further Research

There is little writing portfolio and language class portfolio research conducted with elementary and secondary school students at both state and private schools in Turkey. The researcher would like to suggest that the number of writing portfolio and / or language class portfolio implementation studies at elementary and secondary education should be increased and these studies should be conducted with a large sample of students so that the results can be generalized and, writing and / or language class portfolio could be established as a common practice in English teaching and learning in Turkey.

Second, the researcher would like to suggest that the possible effects of language class portfolios as a tool which encourages learner autonomy and self-assessment on state secondary school students should be investigated.

Third, the researcher would like to suggest that national studies should be conducted to examine the writing attitudes and writing quality of the state primary and secondary school Turkish EFL students.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A. Interest in and Awareness of Writing in English Questionnaire

Please read the following sentences carefully and circle the most appropriate choice to you.

Please give sincere answers to the questions. Thank you in advance!

1. I like to write compositions in English

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

2. I am good at writing compositions in English.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

3. It is easy for me to write compositions in English.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

4. For me, it is enjoyable to write compositions in English.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

5. I learn better when I write.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

6. I ask my peers to read my compositions in English lessons.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

7. I find it useful to get feedback from my English language teachers about the content of my compositions.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

8. I get feedback from my peers about my compositions in English lessons.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

9. At home, I do writing homework in English.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

10. I get feedback from my English language teachers about the content of my compositions.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

11. I find it useful to get feedback from my peers about my compositions.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

12. I get feedback from my English language teachers about the mistakes in my compositions.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

13. I rewrite my compositions correcting the mistakes underlined by my English language teachers.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

14. I revise my compositions a few times in English lessons.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

15. In English lessons, I write my compositions a few times until I reach the best one.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

16. In English lessons, I find it useful to get feedback from my English language teachers about the mistakes in my compositions.

Always Often Sometimes Rarely Never

17. What topics do you like writing about?

18. In your opinion, what are the most important things which must be considered while writing a composition?

19. What do you think you are good at while writing compositions in English (for example; vocabulary, fluency, organization, making grammatically correct sentences and strong command of English etc.)?

20. What do you think your weaknesses are in writing in English?

İNGİLİZCE YAZMA İLGİSİ VE FARKINDALIĞI ANKETİ

Aşağıdaki soruları dikkatle okuyunuz ve size en uygun olan seçeneği daire içine alarak cevaplayınız. Lütfen sorulara içtenlikle cevap veriniz. Teşekkürler.

1. İngilizce kompozisyon yazmayı severim.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

2. Ben iyi İngilizce kompozisyon yazarım.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

3. İngilizce kompozisyon yazmak benim için kolay.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

4. İngilizce kompozisyon yazmak eğlencelidir.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

5. Yazarken daha iyi öğrenirim.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

6. İngilizce derslerinde, kompozisyonlarımı arkadaşlarıma okuturum.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

7. Kompozisyonlarımın içeriği hakkında İngilizce öğretmenlerimden geribildirim almayı faydalı bulurum.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

8. İngilizce derslerinde, kompozisyonlarım hakkında arkadaşlarımdan geribildirim alırım.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

9. Evde İngilizce yazma ödevi yaparım.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

10. Kompozisyonlarımın içeriği hakkında İngilizce öğretmenlerimden geribildirim alırım.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

11. İngilizce derslerinde, kompozisyonlarım hakkında arkadaşlarımdan geribildirim almayı faydalı bulurum.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

12. İngilizce derslerinde, kompozisyonlarımdaki hatalar hakkında İngilizce öğretmenlerimden geribildirim alırım.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

13. İngilizce öğretmenimin gösterdiği hataları düzelterek kompozisyonumu tekrar yazarım.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

14. İngilizce derslerinde, kompozisyonlarımı birkaç kez gözden geçiririm.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

15. İngilizce derslerinde, kompozisyonlarımı en iyiye ulaşıncaya kadar birkaç kez yazarım.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

16. İngilizce derslerinde, kompozisyonlarımdaki hatalar hakkında İngilizce öğretmenlerimden geribildirim almayı faydalı bulurum.

Daima Sık sık Bazen Nadiren Asla

17. Hangi konularda yazmayı seversiniz?

18. Kompozisyon yazarken dikkat edilmesi gereken en önemli şeyler sizce nelerdir?

19. İngilizce kompozisyon yazarken hangi yönlerden (kelime seçimi, akıcılık, düzen, gramer kurallarına uygun cümle kurma, dili iyi kullanma gibi) iyi olduğunuzu düşünüyorsunuz?

20. İngilizce kompozisyon yazarken hangi yönlerden zayıf olduğunuzu düşünüyorsunuz?

Appendix B. Writing Tasks

Name:

Date:

Surname:

Class:

No:

Writing task I (20 minutes)

You are going to visit somebody (a pen-friend, a relative) who has never seen you. Write a well-organized description of yourself (what you look like, what you will be wearing, anything special about yourself, etc.) so he/she can recognize you easily. Write 100 words.

Give your composition a title.

Name:

Date:

Surname:

Class:

No:

Writing task II (60 minutes)

Story

A very special memory

Think of a very special memory, something that happened to you that you will never forget.

Write a story about what happened to you. In your story be sure to:

- Tell what happened and the order in which it happened.
- Give details about the situation, people and events. Also tell how you felt about them.
- Organize your story carefully.
- Give your composition a title.
- Your story should be at least one page long (100 words).

Your story will be judged on how good a story it is, on how lively and precise a manner you use to present situation, people and events, and your feelings and on how interesting it is to the reader.

Name:

Date:

Surname:

Class:

No:

Writing task III (60 minutes)

Below are a number of observations and questions. Select one and write a composition in which you reflect on what is said and state your own viewpoint. You may also take different points of view into account in your composition. In your composition, you may give examples from your personal observations, the books that you have read, the films, plays.

Your composition will be judged on what you have to say, how clearly you present and illustrate your thoughts and how effectively you express them. Give your composition a title.

Your composition should be at least one page long (100 words).

1. Do you think the young need a healthy diet?
2. Do you think the young need schooling?
3. Everybody must learn at least a foreign language, e.g. English?
4. Discipline rules at schools are to keep others and ourselves safe and happy.
5. An old saying goes: "When you cheat, you're really cheating yourself."
6. The older generation never understands the younger one.

Appendix C. Reflection Letter about Essay

REFLECTION LETTER ABOUT ESSAY

Name:

Date:

Surname:

Class:

Submit with your composition. Do not forget to answer the following questions!

1. What were the most important things you considered while writing this composition?
2. What did you strive to achieve while writing this composition?
3. What did you do to achieve your objectives?
4. Did you have any difficulties while writing this composition? If you had, what were they?
5. How many times did you write this composition till you reached the final one?
6. How did your composition evolve around the drafts (what changes did you make around the drafts, why did you need these changes)?
7. What are the strengths of this composition?
8. What are the weaknesses of this composition (what do you need to change or improve)?
9. How can you change or improve these weaknesses?

KOMPOZİSYON HAKKINDA DÜŞÜNCE YANSITMA MEKTUBU

1. Bu kompozisyonu yazarken dikkat ettiğiniz en önemli şeyler nelerdi?
2. Bu kompozisyonu yazarken neyi / neleri başarmaya çalıştınız?
3. Amacınıza ulaşmak için neler yaptınız?
4. Bu kompozisyonu yazarken zorlandığınız yönler oldu mu? Evetse, bunlar nelerdi?
5. Bu kompozisyonu nihai taslağa ulaşıncaya kadar kaç kez yazdınız?
6. Kompozisyonunuz taslaklar etrafında nasıl gelişti? (Her bir taslakta hangi değişiklikleri yaptınız? Bu değişikliklere neden ihtiyaç duydunuz?)
7. Sizce bu kompozisyonun güçlü yanları nelerdir?
8. Sizce bu kompozisyonun zayıf yanları nelerdir?
9. Bu zayıf yanları nasıl geliştirebilirsiniz?

Appendix D. Reflection Letter about Writing Portfolio

REFLECTION LETTER ABOUT WRITING PORTFOLIO

Name:

Date:

Surname:

Class:

Submit with your writing portfolio. Do not forget to answer the following questions!

1. Did writing portfolio help you improve your writing skills in English?
2. Which writing skills did writing portfolio help you improve? What can you do well now?
3. Do you think that writing portfolio is a useful tool for improving writing skills?
4. Do you think that it is necessary to keep a writing portfolio for improving writing skills?
5. Did you have any difficulties during writing portfolio study? If yes, what were they?
6. Which composition in your portfolio do you like most? Why?

YAZIM DOSYASI HAKKINDA DÜŞÜNCE YANSITMA MEKTUBU

1. Sizce yazım dosyası, İngilizce yazı yazma becerilerinizi geliştirmenize yardımcı oldu mu?
2. Yazım dosyası, hangi yazma becerilerinizi geliştirmenize yardımcı oldu? Şimdi neyi iyi yapabilirsiniz?
3. Sizce, yazım dosyası yazma becerilerini geliştirmek için yararlı bir teknik mi?
4. Sizce, yazma becerilerini geliştirmek için yazım dosyası tutmak gerekli mi?
5. Yazım dosyası çalışması esnasında herhangi bir zorlukla karşılaştınız mı? Evetse, bunlar nelerdi?
6. Yazım dosyanızda en çok hangi kompozisyonunuzu seviyorsunuz? Neden?

Appendix E. Focus Group Interview Questions

1. What topics do you like writing about?
2. What were your weaknesses in writing in English before the study?
3. Did writing portfolio help you to improve your weaknesses in writing in English? How?
4. In your opinion, what is a writing portfolio? What did you do with your teacher while you were keeping your writing portfolio?
 - a) Had you ever kept a writing portfolio before the study?
 - b) How often did you write compositions in English before the tenth grade?
 - c) Before this study, had you ever written your compositions in English in drafts receiving peer and teacher feedback between them?
5. What difficulties did you have while you were keeping your writing portfolio?
6. Do you think that it is a must to keep a writing portfolio for improving writing skills in English?" Why / Why not?

ODAK GRUP MÜLAKATI SORULARI

1. Hangi konularda yazmayı seversiniz?
2. İngilizce yazı yazmada zayıf olduğunuz yönler nelerdi?
3. Yazım dosyası tekniği, İngilizce yazı yazmada zayıf olduğunuz yönleri geliştirmenizi sağladı mı? Nasıl?
4. Sizce yazım dosyası tekniği nedir? Bu tekniği uygularken, öğretmeninizle birlikte neler yaptınız?
 - a) Bu çalışmadan önce hiç yazım dosyası tuttunuz mu?
 - b) Bu çalışmadan önce hangi sıklıkla İngilizce kompozisyon yazardınız?
 - c) Bu çalışmadan önce, kompozisyonunuzu hiç taslaklar halinde yazdınız mı ve her taslak hakkında sınıf arkadaşınız ve öğretmeninizden geribildirim aldınız mı?
5. Sizce yazım dosyası, İngilizce yazma becerilerini geliştirmek için mutlaka uygulanması gereken bir teknik mi? Neden? / Neden değil?
6. Yazım dosyası tekniğini uygularken karşılaştığınız zorluklar nelerdir?

Appendix F. Schedule of the Writing Portfolio Study

- 1st week of October Piloting Writing Interest and Awareness Questionnaire
- 2^{dn} week of October Piloting Writing Task and Reflection Letter
- 3rd week of October Administering KET A2
- 4th week of October Administering Writing tasks
- 1st week of November Study began, Personal Profiles
- 2nd week of November Personal Profiles 2
- 3rd week of November Tourist attractions
- 4th week of November **Deadline for Assignment I**
- 1st week of December Thank you letter
- 2^{dn} week of December An informal letter
- 3rd week of December Write a reply to a letter from a friend
- 4th week of December **Deadline for Assignment II**
- 1st week of January Your holiday diary
- 2nd week of January An important first time, What happened to Jane?
- 3rd week of January **Deadline for Assignment III**
- 1st week of February Global warming,
- 2nd week of February Education, Immigration
- 3rd week of February **Deadline for Assignment IV**
- 1st week of March Do you think the young need a healthy diet?
- 2nd week of March Do you think the young need schooling?
- 3rd week of March Do you think you need English?
- 4th week of March **Deadline for Assignment V**
- 1st week of April Personality questionnaire
- 2^{dn} week of April Marcelo's life and my life

- 3rd week of April Is weather getting better or worse?
- 4th week of April What kind of a language learner are you? (Learning styles)
- 5th week of April **Deadline for Assignment VI**
 - 1st week of May Deadline for Portfolio Submission as a whole (5th of May)
 - 1st week of May Re-administering KET A2 (4th of May)
 - 1st week of May Re-administering Writing tasks, study ended

Appendix G. Peer Evaluation and Editing Form for Writing

Reader's name:

Date:

Author's name:

Title of Piece:

Type of Writing:

Portfolio Partners

1. Review your partner's work sample.
2. What do you think the sample shows your partner can do?
3. What do you think your partner did well?
4. What do you think your partner could make better?

Peer Evaluation

5. This piece of writing was:
6. The part I like best was:
7. This piece can be improved by:

Editing Form

Look for these things when editing someone's paper.

Punctuation:

- Periods ,Question Scores
- Capital letters at beginning of sentence, capital letters for names

Sentences:

- Are complete and have a verb.
- Have variety.
- Writer uses paragraphs.

Spelling:

- Correct spelling

Other:

- Neat handwriting

Overall Paper:

Has a main idea.

Is logical and makes sense.

Is organized well.

Appendix H. Self-Assessment of Writing Strategies

Name:

Date:

Before writing:

1. I talked to a friend or partner about the topic.
2. I made a list of ideas on the topic.
3. I made an outline or semantic map.

During writing:

4. I skipped words I didn't know and went back to them later.
5. I substituted a word from my own language.
6. I used drawings or pictures in my writing.

After writing:

7. I checked to see if the writing met my purpose.
8. I reread to see if it made sense.
9. I added information or took out information.
10. I edited for spelling, punctuation, capitals and grammar.

Other strategies I used:

Appendix I. Writing Revision Checklist (Agnew, 1995)

1. Did I write what I wanted to write?
2. Is my topic focused?
3. Will my readers understand what I am saying?
4. Is my writing clear?
5. Is my opening strong? Does it capture the reader's attention?
6. Are my main ideas supported with details? Have I used examples?
7. Does my conclusion contain a final point or summary for my piece?
8. Is all my information needed? Are there any words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs that I can cut? Have I cut all clutter?
9. Are there places I can expand my ideas?
10. Does my piece show unity? Do all of the parts build to a whole?
11. Are my paragraphs cohesive and unified? Does each one contain only one main idea?
12. Is the style right for the subject? Is my style consistent throughout the piece?
13. What part of this piece do I like the best? Why?
14. What part of this piece do I like the least? Why?
15. What part do I feel needs improvement? How can I improve it?

