

**ÇUKUROVA UNIVERSITY
THE INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING DEPARTMENT**

**THE USE OF WRITING PORTFOLIO IN PREPARATORY WRITING
CLASSES TO FOSTER LEARNER AUTONOMY**

Selma DURAK ÜĞÜTEN

A Ph.D. DISSERTATION

Adana, 2009

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Advisor : Asst. Prof. Dr. Şehnaz ŞAHİNKARAKAŞ

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Adana, 2009

To the Directorship of the Institute of Social Sciences, Çukurova University

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This thesis is dedicated to my father Hilmi DURAK and to my mother Fatma DURAK who always support me with their endless patience and love.

ÖZET**HAZIRLIK SINIFLARINDA ÖĞRENCİ ÖZERKLİĞİNİ TEŞVİK ETMEK İÇİN
YAZMA DOSYALAMA TEKNİĞİ KULLANIMI****Selma DURAK ÜĞÜTEN****Doktora Tezi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı****Danışman: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Şehnaz ŞAHİNKARAKAŞ****Haziran, 2009, 160 sayfa**

Bu çalışmada bir İngiliz Dili Eğitimi bölümü hazırlık yazma sınıfında dosyalama tekniği uygulaması kullanıldı. Çalışma aynı zamanda dosyalama tekniğinin öğrencilerin yazma becerilerindeki başarılarını artırmayı ve öğrenci özerkliğini geliştirmeyi amaçlıyor. Çalışmada 2006–2007 döneminde Çukurova Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bölümünde okuyan 30 hazırlık sınıfı öğrencisi yer aldı. Data toplama tekniklerimiz arasında öğrenci yazma dosyaları, ön yazılar, yansıma kâğıtları, mülakat ve özerklik seviye belirleme anketi var.Çalışmada yapılandırıcı bir yaklaşım benimsedik.

Çalışmanın sonuçları dosyalama tekniğinin hazırlık yazma sınıflarında öğrencilerin yazma becerilerindeki başarılarını artırdığı ve öğrenci özerkliğini geliştirdiğini ortaya çıkardı.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yazma Dosyalama Tekniği, Öğrenci Özerkliği, Yapılandırıcılık.

ABSTRACT**THE USE OF WRITING PORTFOLIO IN PREPARATORY WRITING
CLASSES TO FOSTER LEARNER AUTONOMY****Selma DURAK ÜĞÜTEN****Ph. D. Dissertation, English Language Teaching Department****Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Şehnaz ŞAHİNKARAKAŞ****June, 2009, 160 pages**

In this study, portfolio implementation and assessment was used in one preparatory writing class in the English Language Teaching Department. We had two aims in mind: to improve learners' achievement in writing skills by the implementation of writing portfolio and to find out whether or not portfolio implementation would lead to learner autonomy. There were 30 participants who were preparatory class students at Çukurova University English Language Teaching Department in the academic year of 2006-2007. We had writing portfolios, cover letters, reflection sheets, interviews and an autonomy level questionnaire as data collection tools. The theory behind our study was constructivism.

The results of the data analysis showed that the use of writing portfolio may improve learners' achievements in writing skills and foster learner autonomy in preparatory writing classes.

Keywords: Writing Portfolios, Learner Autonomy, Constructivism

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Working on this dissertation was not an easy task. It is the time to thank to the innumerable people who have been involved in the process and completion of this dissertation. This work would not have been completed without their help.

First and foremostly, I would like to express my most sincere gratitude to Asst. Prof. Dr. Şehnaz ŞAHİNKARAKAŞ, the supervisor of my doctoral dissertation, for providing invaluable feedback, moral support and unceasing encouragement throughout the entire period of the study. I am very grateful for her guidance from the earliest stages of this study. Without her encouragement, I would not have the strength to continue this research.

I would like to express my deepest appreciation and thanks to Prof. Dr. A. Necmi Yaşar, the Dean of Education Faculty, whose patience, support and encouragement were important for me.

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to Asst. Prof. Dr. Hasan BEDİR who has been an ideal teacher and advisor for me since I met him. I appreciate him not only for being a member of my dissertation committee but also for giving me the suggestions as how to analyze the data. Throughout my doctoral work he encouraged me to develop independent thinking and research skills. I also owe my thanks to him for sharing his room with me in the last stages of my dissertation.

I am grateful to Asst. Prof. Dr. Ahmet DOĞANAY for his valuable feedback, criticism, and support during the data analysis process. Without his patience, good humor and generous help in the analysis and interpretation of the data, this study would not have been plausible.

My special thanks go to Asst. Prof. Dr. Türkay BULUT from Haliç University, for supporting and encouraging me throughout the whole periods of both my MA thesis and the present PhD dissertation. Her enthusiasm, guidance and support were much

appreciated. Thanks her not only for her support during this thesis but also for her providing me suggestions for a deeper understanding in academic studies.

I owe special thanks to Asst. Prof. Dr. Hülya YUMRU from Çağ University. Her devoting invaluable time for reading previous drafts of this dissertation and providing many valuable comments to better my work improved my dissertation. This work could have never gotten accomplished without this help.

I would like to thank Asst. Prof. Dr. Arkun TATAR from Haliç University for helping me in analyzing the data.

I want to thank Ömer ARSLANTAŞ, my high school teacher, for being an ideal teacher for me.

Very special thanks go to my roommate Ebru GENÇ who shared her room with me. She supported me whenever I was in need. We had a good time together. Thank you very much.

Throughout the years I have spent at Çukurova University, I have met many people whose friendship and support was of great importance for me. Thank you all my colleagues Bilal GENÇ, Namık ÜLKERSOY, Kağan BÜYÜKKARCI, Nurcan KÖSE, Ebru ŞİRE and Hülya TUNCER

My special thanks go to Assoc. Prof. Dr. Erdoğan BADA, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Hatice SOFU, Asst. Prof. Dr. Fehmi Can SENDAN, Asst Prof. Dr. Tijen TÜRELİ, Asst. Prof. Cem CAN, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Zuhale OKAN, Asst. Prof. Dr Rana YILDIRIM, Asst. Prof. Dr. Hatice ÇUBUKÇU, Asst. Prof. Jülide İNÖZÜ, Asst Prof. Dr. Gülten İLİN, Münire BİÇER and Mehmet SEYİS who have always been kind and willing to teach.

I am grateful to the participant of this study for their voluntary participation, contributions, and unceasing effort and support throughout the study. Without their support and enthusiasm, I would not have completed this thesis.

I owe special thanks to Sibel Kocay and the Staff of the Institute of Social Sciences for their support throughout the preparation of the dissertation. I am also grateful to Gökhan TEPEGÖZ for his assistance in using the programs on my computer and in shaping the tables and figures of this thesis. I wish to thank to Mehmet Giriş and the Staff of Eğitim Fotokopi for their help and support.

I would like to thank the Çukurova University Research Fund for their financial support throughout the study (project number: EF 2007 D1).

I would like to thank my family who supported me during my academic years and throughout this study. I thank my father, Hilmi DURAK and my mother Fatma DURAK for their encouragement and continued love. I love them so much. I also appreciate the patience and support of my sister Serap BULUT, Mustafa BULUT and my brother Sedat DURAK. I cannot help thanking to my little niece, Rana. I felt really good when she interrupted me with her constant telephone calls.

I particularly wish to thank my parent-in-law, Elife and İsmail ÜĞÜTEN, for being with me in all stages of my writing this dissertation. I could not finish it if they had not looked after my daughter. I also thank them to be my daughter's sweet grandparents. She loves them so much. I also thank Ercan ÜĞÜTEN for sharing his computer with me and for being my daughter's uncle.

Finally, I would like to thank my husband İrfan ÜĞÜTEN who supports and encourages me during the hardest times of this journey. Thank you very much dear İrfan for being there with patience and love.

And my little daughter, Eda. My special thanks go to you. I felt really bad while I was spending most of time in front of my computer instead of spending with you. I felt sorry when you asked me "Anne bu okul işi ne zaman bitecek?". You are more important than everything in my life. I love you so much. I can never forget how I have felt energetic by your great smiles.

Thanks to everyone whose names I might have forgotten for their support, cooperation and help to make this study a reality.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Background to the Study

Writing is generally regarded as a complex process as it allows writers to explore thoughts and ideas. For learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), it is a painful process as it makes thoughts and ideas concrete which require ability and effort. In order to write effectively, they need to take many things into consideration in all cycles of writing process: before, while and after writing.

Writing is seen as a tool to reinforce the syllabus of the class and this makes learners see writing as a burden. According to Simpson (2004, 1), writing “ was a compounded by the fact that this skill was often relegated to the status of ‘homework’ due to the pressures of time and syllabus requirements, thus nullifying the possibility of teacher guidance” .

The general aim of the writing class is to improve learners’ writing skills. In order to do this, it is important to choose writing activities rather than grammar activities. That is, writing activities do not have to practice grammar or vocabulary of the syllabus. As Gabriellatos states (2002, 1), “writing is a complex skill, and its development involves much more than the accurate use of grammar and a good range of vocabulary. A comprehensive EFL writing program requires the systematic treatment of a large number of interrelated elements”. In order to make writing important and useful, many ways and approaches have been searched, one of which is the portfolio assessment.

There have been a lot of studies conducted to investigate the use of portfolio assessment. For instance, Moya and O’Malley (1994) offered *a portfolio assessment model for ESL* which has five features: comprehensiveness, predetermined and systematic, informative, tailored, and authentic. A portfolio is an assessment tool as well as a part of the learning process itself. It is an approach that makes learners feel that they have learned something, since it is the learner himself who is the centre of the activity and who has the power to assess himself.

Another study comes from Bayram (2006) related to the use of writing portfolios. Her study aimed to investigate the role of writing portfolios in increasing learners' confidence in writing. She also searched if writing portfolios had any role in changing learners' attitudes towards writing. As a result, she found that there was no significant difference in the learners' confidence in writing. However, there was an important change in their attitudes towards writing in a positive way. She states that "keeping a portfolio may have positive influence on students' perceptions about writing" (p.100). As a result of the change in their attitudes towards writing, they are more motivated in writing classes which may have an impact on the improvement of their writing skills.

Şahinkarakaş (1998) found the same results in her study she conducted about the use of writing portfolios. She added that writing portfolios help learners to improve their writing abilities as they learn from their mistakes in their drafts and they become organized and planned since they keep a folder called portfolio. They have to study during the year rather than just a few weeks or days before the exam which also has an effect on the learners' writing improvement. She also adds that using portfolios in a course is not just for an assessment but for a part of learning process. She states that portfolio implementation and assessment in a class foster learner autonomy.

Yıldırım (2005), for instance, had a study about ELT students' perceptions related to learner autonomy as learners and future teachers. As a result, he states that as learners of English, the participants seem to be ready to take responsibility for their own learning; however, they need support and guidance in some aspects. He also adds that there is not much difference between the participants related to learner autonomy as learners and future teachers of English.

We can conclude as a result of these studies that learners become more aware of their learning process and ready to take responsibility for their own learning. They become capable of reflecting on what they do while learning. Awareness, taking responsibility and being reflective are the necessary elements in fostering learner autonomy in a class.

1.1 Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy is a kind of concept that cannot be easily defined as it has different implications. Before looking at some of the most well known definitions in present literature, it would be better to look at some concepts of autonomy.

1.1.1 Definition of Learner Autonomy

Learner autonomy has been a complex word in foreign language education in the past decades. The term "learner autonomy" was first coined in 1981 by Holec, the "father" of learner autonomy. He defines learner autonomy as “ability to take charge of one’s own learning and adds that this ability “is not inborn but must be acquired either by ‘natural’ means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, i.e. in a systematic, deliberate way”. Taking charge of one’s learning means having the responsibility for everything related to this learning. (Holec 1981, 3). That is, learners can freely apply their knowledge either in their learning or outside of learning. Camilleri (1999), Dam (1995) and Benson (2001) support this idea by indicating that if the learners want to take part actively in decision making process of their own learning, this shows that they are on the way of being autonomous.

The central idea behind autonomy is that learners take their own responsibilities for their own learning. For the use of this term in language education, Benson and Voller (1997, 1–2) recommend five different ways:

1. for situations in which learners study entirely on their own;
2. for a set of skills which can be learned and applied in self-directed learning;
3. for an inborn capacity which is suppressed by institutional education;
4. for the exercise of learners’ responsibility for their own learning;
5. For the right of learners to determine the direction of their own learning.

Let us review some of these definitions and try to gain insights into what learner autonomy means and consists of. Various interpretations of learner autonomy can be found in literature. Sometimes self-directed learning and learner autonomy have been used interchangeably. However, there is a certain difference between these concepts. Reinders (2000) defines self-directed learning as a learner-initiated process in which the learner is the center to decide to study. On the other hand, ‘learner autonomy’ is referred

as the capacity to take control over, or responsibility for, one's own learning (Benson, 2001).

According to Little and Dam (1998), there is broad agreement in the theoretical literature that learner autonomy grows out of the individual learner's acceptance of responsibility for his or her own learning. This means that learner autonomy is a matter of explicit or conscious intention: we cannot accept responsibility for our own learning unless we have some idea of what, why, and how we are trying to learn. The learner must take at least some of the initiatives that give shape and direction to the learning process, and must share in monitoring progress and evaluating the extent to which learning targets are achieved. From the point of pedagogical side, in order to foster the development of learner autonomy in formal educational contexts, reflectivity and self-awareness produce better learning.

Learner autonomy does not mean learner isolation from learning atmosphere. In a class there should be independent language learning in which teachers' goal is to give their learners more control over his/her learning; that is what to learn, how to learn, when to learn and why to learn. Learners should decide on their aims, their methods of learning and even they should sometimes assess themselves. According to Koçak (2003), autonomous learning is misunderstood and sometimes seen as solitary learning which means learners are free and learn by themselves.

To sum up, it is clear that teacher and learner are the important elements in language teaching and learning processes, so we all should be aware of our students and their perceptions. Learner autonomy is a complex word and in order to understand it we should know and trust our learners.

In order to make it clear, characteristics of an autonomous learner should be made explicit. Within the context of education, though, there have been different characteristics of autonomous learners suggested by many researchers (see Omaggio, 1978, cited in Thanasoulas, 2000.; EduTech Wiki, n.d; Bren & Mann ,1997; Candy 1991, cited in Benson, 2001, 85; Dickinson, 1987; Chan, 2001, 506). The common characteristics of autonomous learners are:

- having insights into their learning styles and strategies

- being willing to take risks, i.e., to communicate in the target language at all costs
- being critical
- being reflective
- being self-aware
- taking responsibility for own learning
- working creatively with complex situations
- knowing how to manage, monitor and evaluate their own learning
- formulating their own learning objectives
- making decisions on learning materials, topics, strategies and resources
- seeing their relationship to what is to be learned, to how they will learn and to the resources available as one in which they are in charge or in control
- being methodical and disciplined
- being logical and analytical
- demonstrating curiosity, openness and motivation
- being flexible
- showing confidence and have a positive self-concept
- being independent and self-sufficient
- developing and using criteria for evaluating
- developing study plans
- assessing one's own progress (which includes defining criteria for evaluating performance and learning)

1.1.2 Autonomy and Portfolio

As it is understood from the characteristics, we can say that learners are ready to take the responsibility for own learning; that is, learners always ask some questions about their learning like what, when, and why. This shows that learners are critical at the same time which is necessary for gaining learner autonomy.

According to Gwiazda-Rzepecka (in Opalka, 2008, 1), learner autonomy is not an inborn capacity; rather, it is “the ability to regulate one's own thoughts, feelings and actions responsibly”. There are some underlying components of learner autonomy, like *readiness to learn*, *willingness to take responsibility for the process of learning* and *confidence in one's ability as a learner*. Learners should be encouraged to use these

components to be autonomous as they are expected to assume greater responsibility for, and take charge of, their own learning. There are various ways to foster learner autonomy one of which is portfolio use as they make learners to take control of their own learning and reflect on them (Graves & Sunstein, 1992). Portfolios are collections of learners' tasks selected by them and kept in a folder. Farr and Lowe (1991, cited in İşler, 2005, 8) regard portfolio as "a real step toward learner autonomy" as portfolio implementation involves conferencing in which they have a chance to experience making decisions about schoolwork. In this way, they have the responsibility for their own learning and their lives which is the sign of being an autonomous learner. When we look at what Moore (1994, cited in İşler, 2005) says, we can easily say that portfolio use fosters autonomy as portfolio implementation enables students to work outside school and sometimes to select topics by themselves in which they have personal interests. It also allows them for self studying and self correction

Learners do not just put the tasks they selected (or their teachers) into folder; they put the drafts and reflections which may be evidence for their own learning. So the first step is to collect learner's work, which is followed by reflection upon that work. Learners' awareness of the language learning process should be raised which can be done by making learners reflect on what they have done and how they have done it. While they are doing this, they are always busy with some questions like,

- What did I do?
- How did I do?
- Why did I do?
- Do I have any mistakes?
- What can I do for my mistakes?
- Could I do a better version of my work?
- Should I improve it?
- If so, in what way?
- Are there any good points to state?

By doing this, learners become aware of their learning process. Asking learners to keep reflection sheets may give answers to these questions. However, some learners do not like to be asked to analyze what s/he has done. Asking them to keep a journal & diary

may be useful to make them feel themselves as researchers of their works. However, they should be aware of the fact that analyzing their work does not mean to find errors or weak points of the work. They can also praise the product.

To conclude, it can be said that portfolio use fosters learner autonomy by the help of the applications in it like reflection sheet and journal.

1.2 Statement of Problem

In Turkey, many universities have recently launched portfolio implementation in their preparatory classes. Çukurova University is one of them where this implementation is applied in writing classes of preparatory classes and first year of ELT Department. However, at the preparatory classes of Çukurova University, students have negative beliefs towards writing when they come to the university. In high schools in Turkey, writing is ignored as students' main aim is to prepare for university examination which does not involve writing section. When they come to university, they believe that writing is not favored. However, this is not the case at Çukurova University where teachers try to change these negative attitudes towards writing by the help of portfolio implementation which requires learners' purposeful gathering of work and collecting them in a file (Paulson, Paulson & Meyer, 1991). During this time, learner is at the centre of learning. Thus, learners are expected to know what need, why they want to write, how they write, what they expect from a writing course and how they want to be assessed (Bulut & Durak, 2002; Durak, 2003), which are some of the features of autonomous learners.

However, there is a need to see whether and to what extend portfolio implementation at preparatory class in ELT Department of Çukurova University fosters learner autonomy.

1.3 Aim of the Study

The purpose of this study is twofold:

1. to find out whether learners' achievement in writing skills is improved by the implementation of writing portfolio

2. find out whether or not portfolio implementation would lead to learner autonomy

1.4 Research Questions of the Study

This thesis is designed to answer the following research questions:

1. Does the implementation of writing portfolio lead to the improvement of the learners' achievement in writing skill?
2. How does the implementation of writing portfolio enhance autonomy of the learners in terms of
 - a) awareness of themselves
 - b) willingness to take responsibility for the process of learning
 - c) confidence in one's ability as a learner
 - d) being reflective
 - e) being flexible
- 3) Is there any change in learners' thoughts about the use of portfolio in their writing classes?

1.5 Definition of Terms

Constructivism: It is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that we reflect on our experiences and we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. We create our own "rules" to make sense of our experiences. Learning is a process of adjusting our rules to accommodate new experiences (Constructivism, para. 1).

Portfolio: It is a purposeful collection of student work which requires student's efforts, progress, and achievements. Student participation in selecting contents, how they select it, how they assess it and students' thoughts about the work is of great importance for a portfolio (Paulson, Paulson & Meyer 1991).

Learner Autonomy: Holec, the "father" of learner autonomy, defines learner autonomy as "ability to take charge of one's own learning and adds that this ability "is not inborn

but must be acquired either by ‘natural’ means or (as most often happens) by formal learning, i.e. in a systematic, deliberate way”. Taking charge of one’s learning means having the responsibility for everything related to this learning. (Holec, 1981, 3).

Product approach: In this approach, main focus is on the final product which is expected to be perfect, error-free (Dubin & Olshtain, 1994, 46).

Process approach: Learners are free to have errors as the main focus is on “how instruction is carried out and learning is achieved” (Dubin & Olshtain, 1994, 46).

Assessment: It is a process which aims to understand and improve student learning (Palomba & Banta, 1999).

Alternative Assessment: It uses strategies such as case studies, portfolios, and peer review. It is considered to be an important addition to standardized assessment. The rationale behind alternative assessment is to gather evidence from real-life or authentic tasks, use multiple assessment strategies to assess learning, and provide ongoing feedback to students (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001).

Portfolio Assessment: It can be defined as the systematic and longitudinal collection of student work which is created as a response to specific and known objectives. While evaluating, the same criteria is used (What is portfolio assessment, para.1).

Hancock (1994, 2) portfolio assessment can be defined as

“an ongoing process involving the student and the teacher in selecting samples of student work for inclusion in a collection, the main purpose of which is to show the student’s progress. The use of this procedure is increasing in the language field, particularly with respect to the writing skill. It makes intuitive sense to involve students in decisions about which pieces of their work to assess and to assure that feedback is provided. Both teacher and peer reviews are important.”

Traditional Assessment: Traditional assessment is a type of assessment in which students select responses from a multiple-choice list, a true/false list, or a matching list. There is always some standardized, multiple-choice test or a short-answer test that should be completed in a determined time (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001).

Traditional assessment refers to paper-pencil testing (multiple-choice, true/false, matching, short answer) that typically must be completed within a specific amount of time.

Reflective Teaching: As Walter indicated, “the term ‘reflective teaching’ was first used by Dewey in 1933 to describe teacher behavior which involved the reconsideration of teaching beliefs and practices as opposed to routine teaching, which is guided by tradition and authority“ (in Ersöz & Özkan,2000, 23)

1.6 Limitations of the Present Study

The aim of this study is, as stated in Section 1.3, to find out whether learners’ achievement in writing skills is improved by the implementation of writing portfolio and to find out whether or not portfolio implementation would lead to learner autonomy. Portfolio requires a process. However, we conducted this study for two semesters of a preparatory class. This might be a limitation for this study. For further research, portfolio implementation might be given a longer time to display the change the participants have in their achievements in their writing course and in their thoughts of learner autonomy.

Another limitation is that we conducted this study with only one class, 30 students. Due to the number of the participants we had some problems in analyzing the data in SPSS which required more people.

For this study we had only one class so we generated our results for this group. If we had had an experimental group, we would have had a chance to compare the results of our control group with the other group.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter, we try to give related information about the theoretical framework of this study. We aim to give literature review of writing, portfolio and assessment within the frame of constructivism.

2.1 Constructivism

Constructivism is a psychological theory of knowledge and according to this theory, we have experiences and we generate knowledge and meaning from those experiences; that is, knowledge is constructed.

Constructivism is a philosophy of learning founded on the premise that we reflect on our experiences and we construct our own understanding of the world we live in. We create our own “rules” to make sense of our experiences. Learning is a process of adjusting our rules to accommodate new experiences (constructivism, para.1). So the central idea in constructivism is the construction of human learning, which is the building of new information on previous information. Learners bring their own feelings and ideas with them and when they face new information they reconstruct their existing knowledge.

This approach looks for students’ analyzing, sharing, building, and generating based on what they already know (Yumru, 2000). So learner autonomy and initiative are accepted and encouraged as learners learn by fitting new information together with what they already know.

Learners’ being active and their adapting of the information based on learner’s experience are the two principles that are important in constructivist view. As Dougiamas (1998) states learner should be engaged in making meaning. He also indicates some of the tenets of constructivism in pedagogical terms one of which is learner’s coming to class with an existing world-view that filters all experiences and affects their interpretation of observations. In order to change this view, s/he should

work. They learn better by doing. In a learning atmosphere, learners also learn from each other as well as the teacher. For doing all these, construction of new ideas is necessary.

To sum up, constructivism is something which gives importance to learning rather than teaching and which accepts learner autonomy by taking learners' rules into account. Learners are involved in real world situations as how the learner learn is important.

2.1.1 Personal Construct Psychology

George Kelly (1955) is the original proponent of Personal Construction Theory (PCT) and suggested that PCT is based on the model of *man-the-scientist*. People have constructions of their reality and they have their own theories, expectations and hypotheses, like scientists. People carry out their own personal experiments, construct hypotheses and actively seek to confirm or disconfirm them. These constructs are rather like templates. People place over their impressions of any new events or persons with them in order to have something reasonable.

In constructivism, the main focus is the learner because the world is perceived by him/her and he/she has the *freedom to choose* a different meaning of whatever he or she wants. Kelly called this *constructive alternativism* (Roberts, 1998, 29); that is, learners give different meanings to any events they encounter depending on their own experiences. According to Boeree (1997) constructive alternativism is the idea that there is only one true reality which is always experienced from one or another perspective, or alternative construction.

As Zuber-Skerritt indicated “we are not locked in by predetermined events but have a choice of alternatives; and that our present constructs or interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement (1992, 57).”

Kelly also indicated that:

Each person develops a *unique* repertoire of constructs based on his/her experience of the world and assumes that ‘the events we face today are subject to as great a variety of constructions as our wits will enable us to contrive. This is not to say that one construction is as good as any other... but it does remind us

that all our present perceptions are open to question and reconsideration, and... that even the most obvious occurrences of everyday life might appear utterly transformed if we were inventive enough to construe them differently' (in Roberts, 1998, 29).

2.1.2 Kelly's Fundamental Postulate and Eleven Corollaries

Kelly's theory of personal constructs is based on a fundamental postulate, and a set of eleven corollaries which elaborate on it:

Fundamental Postulate: A person's processes are psychologically channelized by the ways in which he anticipates events (Sendan, 1995, 25-32). So Kelly gives importance to the idea that each person has his/her own reality and he or she is the one to decide on the interpretation of it. Zuberr- Skerritt states this postulate as follows:

(the fundamental postulate) states that people's behaviour in the present is determined by the way they anticipate events in the future through the use of personal constructs in order to forecast events (theory building) or to evaluate previous forecasts and their validity or efficiency (theory testing) (cited in Köse, 2006, 17).

Sendan summarises eleven corollaries as follows:

- a) **Construction Corollary:** A person anticipates events by construing their replications
- b) **Individuality Corollary:** Persons differ from each other in their constructions of events
- c) **Organization Corollary:** Each person characteristically evolves, for his convenience in anticipating events, a construction system embracing ordinal relationships between constructs
- d) **Dichotomy Corollary:** A person's construction system is composed of a finite number of dichotomous constructs
- e) **Choice Corollary:** A person chooses for himself that alternative in a dichotomized construct through which he anticipates the greater possibility for extension and definition of his system

- f) **Range Corollary:** A construct is convenient for the anticipation of a finite range of events
- g) **Experience Corollary:** A person's construction system varies as he successively construes the replications of events
- h) **Modulation Corollary:** The variation in a person's construct system is limited by the permeability of the constructs within whose ranges of convenience the variants lie
- i) **Fragmentation Corollary:** A person may successively employ a variety of construction subsystems which are inferentially incompatible with each other
- j) **Commonality Corollary:** To the extent that one person employs a construction of experience which is similar to that employed by another, his psychological processes are similar to those of the other person
- k) **Sociality Corollary:** "To the extent that one person construes the construction processes of another, he may play a role in a social process involving the other person (1995, 25–32)

2.1.3 Constructivist Perspectives in Writing

According to constructivism, learning requires learners to build a personal interpretation of experience by selecting and transforming information, constructing hypotheses and making decisions. However, language learning is not an isolated activity; instead it is a social activity. Social constructivism is important as it emphasizes social interaction in language acquisition.

What is essentially involved in constructivist strategies and activities is a process approach to learning. In a process approach, Langer and Applebee explain a context is created within which students are able to explore new ideas and experiences. Within this context, a teacher's role in providing information decreases and is replaced by a "strengthened role in eliciting and supporting students' own thinking" and meaning-making abilities (1987, 77).

After researching about the Kelly's fundamental postulate and its corollaries, it can easily be said that for this study, the use of writing portfolio implementation and its

assessment are relevant for them since learners' ideas about writing might change as a result of this implementation.

2.2 Writing Skill

“What is good writing?, What makes a set of words or sentences a good writing? Can we teach our learners to write in a good way?” According to some, these questions are unanswerable; however, some think that we can answer them if we know that there are some ways to approach writing.

2.2.1 Approaches to Writing

There are several ways to be used in writing in the classroom. There is not a right or best way that can be used to teach writing skills. It is the teacher to choose a way depending on the type of the student, the subject, the curriculum and many other factors.

During history, writing was seen as a supplementary tool for grammatical items and vocabulary. Learners were given a topic and just wrote about it. Product was very important and learners were full of expectations for a perfect writing in only one draft. However, the perspectives towards writing skill in EFL classes has changed in a positive way since the mid-1970s with the coming up of the new approaches; the focus of teaching writing has changed from product to the process of writing. More attention has been given to learners' awareness of writing skill by encouraging them to focus on the process of writing, rather than the product.

2.2.1.1 Product Approach

What is product? According to Dubin and Olshtain (1994, 49), it is “the specification of the expected outcomes of a course study” . In this respect, we can call the outcome of writing as a product.

This approach focuses on outcome of writing so sentences and grammar are of great importance. According to McDonough and Shaw (1996, 178), the activities used in this approach are “controlled sentence construction, free composition, and the homework function”. According to these traditional writing activities, learners are given a model. Accuracy and product is important rather than content and organization. According to

Nunan (1995, 87), product-oriented approach is “imitating, copying and transforming models of correct language”.

A model for such an approach is outlined below:

Stage 1

Model texts are read, and then features of the genre are highlighted. For example, if studying a formal letter, students' attention may be drawn to the importance of paragraphing and the language used to make formal requests. If studying a story, the focus may be on the techniques used to make the story interesting, and students focus on where and how the writer employs these techniques.

Stage 2

This consists of controlled practice of the highlighted features, usually in isolation. So if students are studying a formal letter, they may be asked to practice the language used to make formal requests, practicing the 'I would be grateful if you would...' structure.

Stage 3

Organization of ideas. This stage is very important. Those who favour this approach believe that the organization of ideas is more important than the ideas themselves and as important as the control of language.

Stage 4

The end result of the learning process. Students choose from a choice of comparable writing tasks. Individually, they use the skills, structures and vocabulary they have been taught to produce the product; to show what they can do as fluent and competent users of the language.(Product and process writing: A comparison, 2009)

2.2.1.2 Process Approach

As a result of product approach, learners were taught grammatical analysis to improve their writing. However, something was missing. According to researchers, learners should go beyond sentence and think creatively. That is development of language is more important than accuracy. This approach gives learners a chance to brainstorm about a topic, outline, write the first draft, rewrite it, revise it and write the final version. Learners do not write for their teachers to find their errors and correct them; instead

they write for themselves. In this approach, learners write their first drafts and give it to their teachers or each other to read it and give feedback. So feedback is important.

Such an approach can have any number of stages, though a typical sequence of activities could proceed as follows (Product and process writing: A comparison, 2009);

Stage 1

Generating ideas by brainstorming and discussion. Students could be discussing qualities needed to do a certain job, or giving reasons as to why people take drugs or gamble. The teacher remains in the background during this phase, only providing language support if required, so as not to inhibit students in the production of ideas.

Stage 2

Students extend ideas into note form, and judge quality and usefulness of ideas.

Stage 3

Students organize ideas into a mind map, spider gram, or linear form. This stage helps to make the (hierarchical) relationship of ideas more immediately obvious, which helps students with the structure of their texts.

Stage 4

Students write the first draft. This is done in class and frequently in pairs or groups.

Stage 5

Drafts are exchanged, so that students become the readers of each others work. By responding as readers, students develop an awareness of the fact that a writer is producing something to be read by someone else, and thus can improve their own drafts.

Stage 6

Drafts are returned and improvements are made based upon peer feedback.

Stage 7

A final draft is written.

Stage 8

Students once again, exchange and read each others' work and perhaps even write a response or reply.

2.2.1.3 Difference Between Process and Product Approach

Product-oriented and process-oriented approaches are the two major ones in writing instruction. In product approach, main focus is on the final product which is expected to be perfect, error-free. However, in process approach, learners are free to have errors as the main focus is on “how instruction is carried out and learning is achieved” (Dubin & Olshtain, 1994, 6).

In process approach, the product is not preconceived, that is, there is no pre-teaching of the items. The aim is to achieve the best thing at the end.

In product approach the use of organization, spelling, grammar and vocabulary is very important, whereas in process approach, brainstorming, outlining, writing the first draft, revising the first draft, editing the first draft, maybe writing it many times and writing the final draft are at the center of attention.

The difference between process and product writing is given in detail in the following table (Product and process writing: A comparison, 2009):

Table 2.2.1.3 The difference between process and product writing

Process Writing	Product Writing
text as a resource for comparison	imitate model text
ideas as starting point	organisation of ideas more important than ideas themselves
more than one draft	one draft
more global, focus on purpose, theme, text type, i.e., reader is emphasised	features highlighted including controlled practise of those features
collaborative	individual
emphasis on creative process	emphasis on end product

As it is seen from the table, in process writing, writer busy during the process as s/he deals with more than one draft which requires more effort. Main focus is not on the product because process writing deals with the process.

Despite their differences and similarities, both approaches were used for the same purpose; to improve learners' writing skill. So it is teachers' duty to decide which approach to use depending on the situation, learners, and aim of the course. Some topics may require using product-oriented approach, some require process approach, or both of them. The two approaches are not necessarily incompatible. Process writing may be integrated with the practice of studying written models in the classroom.

2.3 Portfolios

2.3.1 Definition of Portfolio

There have been many definitions of portfolio in literature which are similar to each other. A portfolio is a collection of students' written and collected documents over time for some changing goals. According to Paulson, Paulson & Meyer (1991), a portfolio is a purposeful collection of student work which requires student's efforts, progress, and achievements. Student participation in selecting contents, how they select it, how they assess it and students' thoughts about the work is of great importance for a portfolio. In Venn's terms (2000, 530–531), a student portfolio is

“-a systematic collection of student work and related material that depicts a student's activities, accomplishments, and achievements in one or more school subjects. The collection should include evidence of student reflection and self-evaluation, guidelines for selecting the portfolio contents, and criteria for judging the quality of the work. The goal is to help students assemble portfolios that illustrate their talents, represent their writing capabilities, and tell their stories of school achievement..”.

2.3.2 Types of Portfolio

There are many different types of portfolios, each of which can have different goals for specific person or groups. The following is a list of the types most often cited in the literature:

- **Documentation portfolio**

- is also known as the "working" portfolio. Specifically, this approach involves a collection of work over time showing growth and improvement reflecting students' learning of identified outcomes. The documentation portfolio can include everything from brainstorming activities to drafts to finished products. The collection becomes meaningful when specific items are selected out to focus on particular educational experiences or goals. It can include the best and weakest of student work (What are some different types of portfolios, para.2)

- **Showcase portfolio**

- is best used for summative evaluation of students' mastery of key curriculum outcomes, by including students' very best work, determined through a combination of student and teacher selection. Only completed work should be included. This type of portfolio is also compatible with audio-visual artifact development, including photographs, videotapes, and electronic records of students' completed work. The showcase portfolio should also include written analysis and reflections by the student upon the decision-making process (es) used to determine which works are included (What are some different types of portfolios, para.4)

- **Teaching portfolio**

- describes and documents multiple aspects of your teaching ability. There are two basic types of portfolio.

- A summative portfolio is created for the purpose of applying for an academic job or for promotion and tenure within a department.
- A formative portfolio is created for the purpose of personal and professional development. (Developing a teaching portfolio, para.4)

- **Professional portfolio**

- is a collection of documents that you might submit as you go through the promotion and tenure process. This type of portfolio would include all of your work as a scholar, including your research progress, your teaching experience

and accomplishments, as well as your record of academic service. (Developing a teaching portfolio, para.3)

- **Electronic portfolio**

also known as an **e-portfolio** or **digital portfolio**, is a collection of electronic evidence assembled and managed by a user, usually on the Web (also called Webfolio). Such electronic evidence may include inputted text, electronic files, images, multimedia, blog entries, and hyperlinks. E-portfolios are both demonstrations of the user's abilities and platforms for self-expression, and, if they are online, they can be maintained dynamically over time. Some e-portfolio applications permit varying degrees of audience access, so the same portfolio might be used for multiple purposes (Electronic portfolio, para.1)

- **Writing portfolio**

A portfolio is simply a collection of writing in order to assess the growth of writers. The main purpose is not of course just to assess; by the help of writing portfolios, the strengths and weaknesses of the writer may be identified which may give a chance to monitor the goals of writing.

Organizing the pieces of writing within the completed portfolio is important for self-evaluation as learners will be able to see their progress and how this portfolio has helped them improve as a writer.

Writing Portfolio requires students to select the best work they have completed. In addition, it asks for a reflective essay in which students will both assess the products in their portfolio and reflect on the development of their writing skills throughout the course. According to Murphy (1994, 143), writing portfolios “document performance” since they show what a student can do. They provide evidence of students' own growth as it gives a chance to monitor on what they have done, how they have done, and why they have done it.

As teachers, we should set our criteria for content and outcomes as portfolios can communicate concrete information about what is expected of students in terms of the

content and quality of performance in specific curriculum areas. They also provide a way of assessing their progress along the way, provide teachers and researchers with information relevant to the cognitive processes that students use to achieve academic outcomes.

2.3.3 Characteristics of Portfolio

According to Barton and Collins (1997, cited in the use of portfolio assessment 2009), the distinguishing characteristics of any type of portfolio used for assessment are that portfolios should be:

1) Multisourced (allowing for the opportunity to evaluate a variety of specific evidence)

Multiple data sources include both people (statements and observations of participants, teachers or program staff, parents, and community members), and artifacts (anything from test scores to photos, drawings, journals, & audio or videotapes of performances).

2) Authentic (context and evidence are directly linked)

The items selected or produced for evidence should be related to program activities, as well as the goals and criteria. If the portfolio is assessing the effect of a program on participants or communities, then the "evidence" should reflect the activities of the program rather than skills that were gained elsewhere.

3) Dynamic (capturing growth and change)

An important feature of portfolio assessment is that data or evidence is added at many points in time, not just as "before and after" measures. Rather than including only the best work, the portfolio should include examples of different stages of mastery. At least some of the items are self-selected. This allows a much richer understanding of the process of change.

4) Explicit (purpose and goals are clearly defined)

The students or program participants should know in advance what is expected of them, so that they can take responsibility for developing their evidence.

5) Integrated (evidence should establish a correspondence between program activities and life experiences)

Participants should be asked to demonstrate how they can apply their skills or knowledge to real-life situations.

6) Based on ownership (the participant helps determine evidence to include and goals to be met)

The portfolio assessment process should require that the participants engage in some reflection and self-evaluation as they select the evidence to include and set or modify their goals. They are not simply being evaluated or graded by others.

7) Multipurposed (allowing assessment of the effectiveness of the program while assessing performance of the participant).

A well-designed portfolio assessment process evaluates the effectiveness of your intervention at the same time that it evaluates the growth of individuals or communities. It also serves as a communication tool when shared with family, other staff, or community members. In school settings, it can be passed on to other teachers or staff as a child moves from one grade level to another.

Moreover, a portfolio should have other features like

Being Structured

A structured portfolio should be organized, complete, and creative in its presentation. Questions like “Is my portfolio neat? Are the contents displayed in an organized fashion? Are the contents representative for the purpose that it is intended?” may help to have a structured portfolio. (Characteristics of an Effective Portfolio, para. 1)

Being Representative

a portfolio should also be comprehensive. The documentation should represent the scope of one's work. It should be representative across courses and time. “Does my portfolio portray the types and levels of courses that I have taught? Does my portfolio display a cross-section of my work in teaching?” are among the questions

we may ask to have a representative portfolio. (Characteristics of an Effective Portfolio, para. 2)

Being Selective

While preparing a portfolio, there is a tendency to cover all the things worked on before. However, if a portfolio is being used either for summative or formative purposes, careful attention should be given to conciseness and selectivity in order to appropriately document one's work. So limiting the contents may be more appropriate depending on the type of portfolio. (Characteristics of an Effective Portfolio, para. 3)

2.3.4 Components of Portfolio

Cole et al. (2000) claim that a portfolio should contain the learner's personal goals, interests, and learning styles. Brown also offers a list of some materials that may be included in portfolios (2004, 256):

- several drafts and final forms of essays and compositions
- reports, Project outlines
- poetry and creative prose
- artwork, photos, newspaper or magazine clippings
- audio and/or video recordings of presentations, demonstrations
- journals, diaries and other Professional reflections
- tests, test scores and written homework exercises
- notes on lectures, and
- Self-and peer-assessments-comments, evaluations and checklists

The content of portfolio may change according to the type and aim of the portfolio.

There are eleven components of a portfolio as stated below:

1. Cover Page: It is the first impression of the portfolio and must contain the following information:

- * Prior learning Assessment Portfolio (identify process)
- * Department/(School
- * Course name and number
- * Student's name

2. Student's contact information: it includes:

- * student's name
- * student's number
- * student's contact information

3. Table of Contents

4. Chronological Record

5. Resume (optional): must be current

6. Goals statement: a statement of educational and career goals

7. Course Information: It includes

Course description

Course syllabus

8. Learning Statement: This is the term used interchangeably for the term cover letter which is the major component of a portfolio since it describes your experience and identifies the learning acquired. You deal with details by asking why, what, when, where, how, and who questions. The first part gives information about the author of the portfolio; a kind of autobiography. The second part is similar to reflection where participants are supposed to evaluate themselves as a whole; how they performed during the process, what they gained from the process, and what kind of changes, if any, they underwent. Reflection Sheets are the other important part which is key elements of portfolios. Through the reflection sheets, participants gain insight into their own work. They reflect on how they performed the task, why they chose the text, and what they have learned. This process awakens participants' self-awareness and fosters their self-assessment skills. (Köse, 2006, 49)

9. List/Index of Documentation

10. Transcripts

11. List of Assessment Requests

(Description of portfolio components, 2009)

For this study, cover letters, probably the most consistently required document appearing in students' writing portfolios (Conway, 1994, 83), are one of our main data collection tools as it gives detailed information about the learner and his/her ideas and feelings. It helps students to become "more thoughtful and aware about their writing processes" (Elbow, 1994, 41) since it requires students to explain and reflect on

everything they put in their portfolios and talk about the procedure of preparing their portfolios.

2.4 Assessment

2.4.1 Definition of Assessment

Assessment plays an important part in the teaching-learning process at all levels of education. Since assessment plays such an important part in the future of students there is no doubt that any assessment system will determine what students learn and how they do it. Hence assessment will also determine the way in which we teach and what we teach. So what is an assessment?

Assessment is not just about grading and examinations. It is also about getting to know our students and the quality of their learning and to use this knowledge and understanding to their benefit. Assessment is one of the most important parts of the teaching and learning process. As Palomba and Banta states (1999), assessment is a process which aims to understand and improve student learning. However, “How will we assess a work?” is an important question to be answered as there has been a lot of assessment types.

After making it clear about the definition of assessment, there comes another big question, “Why do we assess?” We assess a work with a purpose in mind which may change depending on the work. Following are some reasons of assessing:

1. Assessment is needed for learning

The primary function of assessment is to measure student learning. According to Bransford, Brown, and Cocking (1999), assessment and feedback are very important as they help people learn. Assessment can be seen as a mirror which provides information about the levels of understanding that students are reaching. For learners, in order to gain insight into their learning and their understanding, they should receive frequent feedback.

2. Assessment is needed for effective teaching

Assessment helps learning effectively in ways that students are trying to solve problems or they believe that their work will be considered fairly and honestly.

In conclusion, an important purpose of assessment is to make learners develop necessary and crucial knowledge and skills as a result of the course or program.

2.4.2 Types of Assessment

Two types of assessment can be talked basically: conventional or traditional and alternative assessment.

Traditional assessment is a type of assessment in which students select responses from a multiple-choice list, a true/false list, or a matching list. There is always some standardized, multiple-choice test or a short-answer test that should be completed in a determined time (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001).

On the other hand, in recent years, there is a shift from traditional assessment to alternative assessment, which uses strategies such as case studies, portfolios, and peer review. It is considered to be an important addition to standardized assessment. The rationale behind alternative assessment is to gather evidence from real-life or authentic tasks, use multiple assessment strategies to assess learning, and provide ongoing feedback to students (Pellegrino, Chudowsky, & Glaser, 2001).

It may be easy to use traditional assessment as there is not much work for teachers to do. However, for alternative assessment, both teacher and the student are very busy with strategies used. Although it is more tiring to use, in recent years teachers prefer it as it makes their students active in a learning situation.

2.4.3 Assessment of L2 Writing

Assessing L2 writing is a difficult task for a teacher as the scores they give may have a significant effect on learners' lives. Hyland (2003), for instance, states that assessment is not only administering exams and giving marks. Evaluating learner's writing performance is a formative process which has an important impact on student learning, the design of the writing course teaching strategies and teacher feedback.

Process approach to writing has many implications for writing assessment since it is not summative but formative. According to Garrison and Ehringhaus (n.d) summative assessments are given periodically to determine at a particular point in time what

students know and do not know. So what the learner did at the end of the course is important; however, formative assessment provides the information needed to adjust teaching and learning while they are happening. In this sense, formative assessment informs both teachers and students about student understanding at a point when adjustments can be made.

They also indicate that students should be encouraged to be involved both as assessors of their own learning and as resources to other students. There are numerous strategies for teachers to do it. Engaging students in the assessment of their own learning is providing them with descriptive feedback as they learn. Descriptive feedback provides students with an understanding of what they are doing well, links to classroom learning, and gives specific input on how to reach the next step in the learning progression. This does not mean the absence of teacher involvement.

They also suggested instructional strategies that are integral to the formative assessment process. They are:

- **Criteria and goal setting** with students engages them in instruction and the learning process by creating clear expectations. In order to be successful, students need to understand and know the learning target/goal and the criteria for reaching it. Using student work, classroom tests, or exemplars of what is expected helps students understand where they are, where they need to be, and an effective process for getting there.
- **Observations** go beyond walking around the room to see if students are on task or need clarification. Observations assist teachers in gathering evidence of student learning to inform instructional planning. This evidence can be recorded and used as feedback for students about their learning or as anecdotal data shared with them during conferences.
- **Questioning strategies** should be embedded in lesson/unit planning. Asking better questions allows an opportunity for deeper thinking and provides teachers with significant insight into the degree and depth of understanding. Questions of this nature engage students in classroom dialogue that both uncovers and expands learning.

- **Self and peer assessment** helps to create a learning community within a classroom. Students who can reflect while engaged in metacognitive thinking are involved in their learning. When students have been involved in criteria and goal setting, self-evaluation is a logical step in the learning process. With peer evaluation, students see each other as resources for understanding and checking for quality work against previously established criteria.
- **Student record keeping** helps students better understand their own learning as evidenced by their classroom work. This process of students keeping ongoing records of their work not only engages students, it also helps them, beyond a "grade," to see where they started and the progress they are making toward the learning goal (n.d., 2)

In order to have an autonomous learner, a teacher may use these strategies since they foster learner autonomy. An autonomous learner is expected to be critical, ready to set learning goals and capable of having self-assessment. A teacher may foster learner autonomy by implementing portfolio assessment in his/her classes because portfolio assessment requires embedding of the strategies in implementation. Learners are at the core of learning process in portfolio implementation and it is the teacher's duty to make learner involved in writing assessment process by giving them opportunity to edit their work, reflect upon it and giving constant feedback. Portfolio assessment gives teachers a chance to make their learners involved and edit their work and deal with it.

2.4.4 Portfolio Assessment

2.4.4.1 Definition of Portfolio Assessment

As defined before, a portfolio is a systematic collection of student work. It is more than a file filled with the student's work. It shows the student's progress over time. In addition to this, portfolios play an important role in assessing student's process for learning. So how students arrive at their end is more important than products. Moya and O'Malley (1994, 2) differ portfolio from portfolio assessment. They state that "a portfolio is a collection of a student's work, experiences, exhibitions, self-ratings (i.e., data), whereas portfolio assessment is the procedure used to plan, collect, and analyze the multiple sources of data maintained in the portfolio". According to them, a portfolio may give enough information about student's capabilities in learning if it is based on a

systematic assessment and added that portfolio used for educational assessment should offer more than a showcase of a learner's products.

According to Hancock (1994, 2) portfolio assessment can be defined as

“an ongoing process involving the student and the teacher in selecting samples of student work for inclusion in a collection, the main purpose of which is to show the student's progress. The use of this procedure is increasing in the language field, particularly with respect to the writing skill. It makes intuitive sense to involve students in decisions about which pieces of their work to assess and to assure that feedback is provided. Both teacher and peer reviews are important.”

It is the systematic and longitudinal collection of student work which is created as a response to specific and known objectives. While evaluating, the same criteria is used. (What is portfolio assessment, para.1)

The idea behind portfolio assessment is that it provides a way to assess student's progress over time. It gives a chance to monitor the changes that a student has during learning procedure. Assessment is done by measuring the individual works as well as the portfolio as a whole with a purpose in mind.

2.4.4.2 Purposes of Portfolio Assessment

Before implementing portfolio assessment, there are some requirements to be done, such as deciding on the purpose that the portfolio will serve. Purposet will give shape the following procedure like deciding on the task, assessment type, assessment criteria and evaluation of the portfolio. Portfolios may be used for different aims some of which are given below:

- Portfolios are a form of alternative/authentic assessment in which a student's progress is measured over a period of time in various language learning contexts. Portfolios can include evidence of specific skills and other items at one particular time and language performance and progress over time, under different conditions, in all four modalities (reading, writing, listening, and speaking) or all three communication modes (interpersonal, interpretive, and

presentational). Using a combination of testing instruments lends validity and reliability to the portfolio.

- Portfolio assessment is closely linked to instruction, which has two educational benefits. First, linking assessment to instruction means that you are sure that you are measuring what you have taught. Second, portfolios reveal any weaknesses in instructional practices.
- Portfolio assessment is by nature incorporated fully into instruction: there is no time lost on assessment. Assessment is a true learning experience, and not external to the learning process.
- Student assessment portfolios promote positive student involvement. As students create their portfolios, they are actively involved in and reflecting on their own learning.
- Portfolios offer the teacher and student an in-depth knowledge of the student as a learner. This means that the teacher can individualize instruction for the student. Weak areas can be strengthened and areas of mastery built upon. Learners are involved in this process of tracking their learning and can take control of their learning.
- Using portfolios introduces students to an evaluation format with which they may need to become familiar as more schools and districts adopt portfolio assessment.
- Using assessment portfolios gives the teacher opportunities to involve parents in their children's language learning. Parental involvement is an important factor in educational success. (Why use portfolio assessment, 2008)

While implementing portfolio, a teacher wants to encourage self-directed learning since portfolio requires this. It is a collection of student's work over time so it has a function to foster learning about learning. For instance, they may learn while they are reflecting on their own works. (Prince George's County Public Schools: portfolio assessment 2008). That means they become self-assessors (White, 1994, 31). They begin to learn how to assess their first drafts which is very difficult for many students since they do not see anything wrong with their work.

Using portfolio assessment in a class is useful both for teachers and learners. . According to Elbow (1994), as a result of implementing portfolio assessment in a class,

learners have a chance to use a good writerly process which requires exploring a topic in a writing, to think about it, to get feedback and to make revision. Another advantage of portfolio assessment comes for the teacher of that class who has a chance to evaluate the process itself. That is, since portfolios contain more than one paper teachers may evaluate a student's strengths and weaknesses. They cannot make inference about learner's ability depending on only one paper.

Enginarlar (1994) points out that portfolio assessment requires learners to write better since it provides them with the opportunities of revision, feedback from peers and teachers. Peer and teacher assessment have an impact on student's own learning.

To conclude, portfolio assessment has many positive sides both for teachers and learners which will be discussed in the following section.

2.4.4.3 Advantages of Portfolio Assessment in Foreign Language Teaching

When it is compared to traditional assessment, implementing portfolio assessment in a class has many advantages. First of all, traditional assessment does not give much responsibility to the students. They are only responsible to give an end product. However, in portfolio assessment students are responsible for their own learning. Portfolio assessment does not deal with the product since it gives importance to how it is produced. In traditional assessment, learners are not at the center of learning process. As teachers do not see students as learners, they do not involve them in their teaching and assessing processes. On the other hand, in portfolio assessment, learners are also responsible for their assessment since they are embedded in all stages of this implementation.

The following table gives the difference between traditional assessment and portfolio assessment in detail:

Table 2.4.4.4 Traditional assessment vs. Portfolio assessment

Traditional	Portfolio
Measures student's ability at one time	Measures student's ability over time
Done by teacher alone; student often unaware of criteria	Done by teacher and student; student aware of criteria
Conducted outside instruction	Embedded in instruction
Assigns student a grade	Involves student in own assessment
Does not capture the range of student's language ability	Captures many facets of language learning performance
Does not include the teacher's knowledge of student as a learner	Allows for expression of teacher's knowledge of student as learner
Does not give student responsibility	Student learns how to take responsibility

(What is portfolio assessment, 2008)

As it is understood from the table, it enables teacher's cooperation with students. They share the responsibility for setting learning goals, tasks, assessment process and assessment type. So it provides opportunities for students and teachers to discuss learning goals and the progress toward those goals. It also gives a chance to the student to reflect on what s/he has done which requires self-evaluation and critical thinking. Peer evaluation is important since it enables cooperative learning (Venn, 2000)

Gallehr (1993; cited in Richards and Renandya, 2002) states that no system of assessment is as perfect as portfolio assessment. Although portfolio assessment requires learners to write, they can choose the topic, audience, responders in the class and revision strategies.

Murphy (1994) states the use of portfolio in a class shows that learners are involved in all stages of the assessment process by the help of the portfolio that enables teachers to collect necessary information about the learner and his/her progress over time. Reflection sheets in a portfolio also used to uncover the rhetorical and cultural models students bring to the task of learning to write.

To sum up, portfolio assessment enhances students' creativity and productivity and provides information about both the strengths and weaknesses of students (Brown and Hudson, 1998).

2.4.4.4 Disadvantages of Portfolio Assessment in Foreign Language Teaching

Besides these advantages, portfolio has some drawbacks. Time consuming is one of the most common ones since it requires extra time to plan an assessment system and conduct the assessment. Students sometimes find portfolio implementation procedure difficult to manage since they have to spend time while they are gathering all of the necessary data. It is a systematic implementation so everything should be clear before starting to use it, like making purpose and criteria for assessment clear. It also requires students to be disciplined in order to fulfill the requirements of portfolio assessment (Venn, 2000).

Portfolios are special to the groups they are designed for. So it is difficult to make generalizations. As Köse (2006, 40) indicates “the findings and conclusions drawn from the evaluation and analysis of the portfolios of a target group might not be compared to students in other institutions or even generalized. These findings are specific to the environment where the portfolio is implemented”.

Another disadvantage is related to its evaluation since it keeps more than one paper which requires much evaluation. Some accept it as an advantage some disadvantage. Students also feel that everything they write should be kept in their portfolios for assessment since they do lots of exercises and other work. Elbow (1994, 52) points out that “there is no such thing as too much evaluation. We are always involved in evaluation of some sort every moment that we teach. How else will students improve if they do not get constant evaluative feedback of one sort or another about strengths and weaknesses of their writing? Perhaps they don't need formal testing or holistic scoring

or even numbers at all, but they need constant evaluative responses as to strengths and weaknesses”.

In short, we should accept that although portfolio assessment has some disadvantages, it makes evaluation pervasive and comprehensive. Students spend much more time for the preparation of portfolio; however, they are involved in the procedure of both implementation and evaluation of portfolio which make them aware of their progress over time.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

In the following sections, we will deal with the design, participants and data collection tools of this study in detail.

3.1 The Design of the Study

The aim of this study is to improve learners' achievement in writing skills by the implementation of writing portfolio and find out whether or not portfolio implementation would lead to learner autonomy.

The theory behind this study is constructivism in which learning takes place by the help of construction of new information with an existing one which requires a process (see section 2.1). So learning is seen as a process. Portfolio assessment was implemented with the idea of constructivism in mind because learners deal with the meaning and how they learn. By the help of this implementation, we had a chance to make learners' ideas clear.

A mixed-methods design was used for the present study since it is “a simple shorthand to stand for research that integrates quantitative and qualitative research within a single project” (Bryman, 2008, 603) So this kind of design mixes both quantitative and qualitative research data, techniques and methods in one case study. Creswell (cited in Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, 443) notes that there are three types of mixed-methods designs:

- triangulation design in which the researcher collects both quantitative and qualitative data, compares the results, and then uses those findings to see whether they validate each other.
- explanatory design in which the researcher first collects and analyzes quantitative data and then contains qualitative data to follow up and refine the quantitative findings.

— exploratory design in which the researcher first collects qualitative data and then uses the findings to give direction to quantitative data collection.

A case study, on the other hand, is defined as “a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle” (Nispert & Watt, cited in Cohen et al. 2007). A case comprises “just one individual, classroom, school, or program” (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006, 438). They also add that a case is not an individual or a situation to be identified. It may be an event, an activity or an ongoing activity.

Yin (1994, 15) mentions the following features of a case study:

1. A case study copes with the technically distinctive situation in which there will be many more variables of interest than data points, and as one result,
2. It relies on multiple sources of evidence, with data needing to converge in a triangulation fashion, and as another result,
3. It benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis.

Considering the features of mixed-type research design, for the present study, we used different data collection tools for collecting our data: qualitative and quantitative. Our qualitative data come from reflection sheets, cover letter and the interviews we conducted. The analysis of the results of the questionnaire and the participants' grades are our quantitative data.

3.2 Participants

Before we conducted our study, we needed to know something about our participants so in order to gain this information we had a literacy autobiography sheet which had 10 questions about their age, gender and writing background. We did not analyze them as our aim is just to have some information about our participants.

Convenience sampling strategy was used in this study to choose the participants. According to Creswell (1994) “a researcher may use this strategy because a whole group of individuals is available to take part or the participants volunteer to participate in this study”. The participants of this study were 30 preparatory class students, 19

female and 11 male, at English Language Teaching (ELT) Department of Education Faculty of Çukurova University. The mean of their age is 19. When they come to the university, all the students are given a language proficiency test prepared by preparatory class teachers at ELT department in order to identify whether the students will attend preparatory class or the first class. If they cannot pass the examination, they will attend the preparatory class for a year. In the preparatory class, they have four skills as a course: reading, writing, listening and speaking and grammar. They have six hours for each skill per week.

3.3 Ethical Issues

At the beginning of the study, we informed our participants about their participation in a study and they all gave their written consents (see Appendix 1) before our implementation. They were given a syllabus of the course which contained necessary information about the course. They were also informed that the grades of the portfolio would be assessed as 80 % of the final grade. At the beginning of the study, participants were told that the things they wrote and told would be used only for this study.

3.4 The Data Collection Tools

Data of this study were collected from three main sources: writing portfolios, questionnaire and an interview. We had reflection sheets and cover letters in writing portfolios. First, to see students' improvement in their writing skills (Res. Ques. 1) the 10 tasks in their portfolios were used. Secondly, a questionnaire prepared by Camilleri (1996) named "a questionnaire to help you establish your personal level of autonomy" was distributed at the beginning and at the end of the study in order to see the change in their autonomy level (Res. Ques. 2). Besides, an interview was conducted related to their portfolios to see whether portfolio implementation and assessment affect the participants' thoughts about portfolio use in their courses (Res. Ques. 3). We used the data coming from reflection sheets and cover letters for all the research questions.

3.4.1 Writing Portfolio

While implementing portfolio in writing class, we dealt with some essential elements in a portfolio like cover letter, table of content, dates, drafts, reflection sheets, free and

compulsory tasks. Reflection sheets and cover letter were important for us as they were analyzed. Participants were free to use either English or their mother tongue.

3.4.1.1 Cover Letter

Cover letters were of great importance for us as they were one of our main data collection tools to observe students' improvement and autonomy. It had two parts. In the first part, participants were asked to write their autobiographies at the beginning of the implementation. Second part was written at the end of the implementation which made participants to think about what they learned during the implementation, how they learned it, what they gained and whether or not there was a change in their views towards writing.

When we asked our participants to write cover letters, some of them said that they had difficulty in writing in English and preferred to use Turkish which was their mother tongue. So we let our participants free to choose the language they would use.

3.4.1.2. Written Reflection Sheets

Written reflection sheets were the other important data collection tool for this study. When we told our participants that they would reflect on what they wrote, we had difficulty since reflection was not an area that they were familiar with. So before starting data collection, we gave them information about what reflection was, how they would do it. Participants were asked to reflect on each task they dealt with during the semester. As in cover letters, they were free to use either English or Turkish as we did not deal with language. Our aim was to collect data in order to elicit their ideas and feelings about this implementation.

We also asked our participants to keep reflective diaries. However, this did not work as they got bored to write them. When we asked the reason, they said that they wrote everything on their reflection sheets so they found it useless to repeat the same things.

3.4.2 Interview

In this study we conducted an interview at the beginning and at the end of the implementation to find out whether portfolio implementation and assessment had any effects on the participants' thoughts about portfolio implementation and assessment (See Appendix 2). What they thought about portfolio implementation at the beginning and whether or not there was a change in their thoughts at the end were important issues for us. At the beginning of the implementation, while we were interviewing with the participants they had difficulty in finding sentences about the topics we asked. However, at the end of the implementation, participants were more eager to speak as they had experienced portfolio implementation and had lots of things to say.

3.4.3 Autonomy Level Questionnaire

As Benson (2001) states, it is not easy to directly observe autonomy level of a learner. Instead, some exercises of autonomy in different aspects can be observed. In order to measure what the learner gained in autonomy, behaviors associated with autonomy should be identified. In literature, questionnaires are used to measure students' beliefs and perceptions about autonomy (Camileri, 1999; Yıldırım, 2005; Köse, 2006).

In this study, a learner autonomy questionnaire was distributed at the beginning and at the end of the implementation to find out if there was a change in the levels of the participants' autonomy. The questionnaire (See Appendix 3) was developed by Camileri (1996) for a research project which consisted of 19 main questions employing a five-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 to 5. The questions had key words related to learner autonomy. There were also yes/no type questions which we used for content analysis of the data. The participants had a chance to write comments on the questions.

3.5 Data Collection Procedure

3.5.1 Pilot Study

Before conducting our main study, we conducted a pilot study in spring semester of 2005–2006 academic year. During the study, eight different tasks were given to the participants to deal with and reflect on them. When they completed each task, they had a chance to talk with their instructor, either in pairs or individually. At the end of the

study, we interviewed with the participants to gather information about their beliefs and feelings about portfolio implementation.

As a result of the analysis of the findings in the pilot study, we realized that there were some shortcomings and we identified following points to be revised for the main study:

a) As a result of our interviews with the participants, it became clear that eight tasks for a semester were tiring for them. So for the main study, we decided to give four tasks for a semester.

b) In the pilot study, we interviewed with the participants only once; however, we realized that it was not enough to see if there was a change in their ideas. So for the main study, we interviewed with the participants at the beginning and at the end of the study.

c) While conducting the pilot study we thought that by the help of interview questions, we might have an idea about the autonomy level of participants. But the results showed that we needed to conduct an autonomy level questionnaire in the main study.

d) Implementing portfolio in a writing class was new for the researcher so during the pilot study, she experienced using portfolio in a writing class and had to learn the details.

3.5.2 Main Study

We conducted portfolio implementation and assessment in writing class for two semesters of an academic year for the purpose in mind to see whether or not portfolio implementation had an impact on learners' achievement in writing skills and learner autonomy.

Participants had six hour writing a week so we met six times for writing course one of which was for conferencing. At the beginning of the implementation, participants had difficulty in understanding what portfolio was and how it was implemented. So we had many hours to make these points clear. They asked many questions about reflecting on

what they wrote and keeping their tasks and reflection sheets in a file. Some found it useless. We answered all their questions in order to make all of them understand the procedure.

This study lasted for a year consisting of two semesters. There were fourteen weeks in each semester. We gave ten tasks to our participants for the study: five for the first semester and five for the second semester. After giving each task, we had tutorials with the participants. During these hours, they had a chance to ask the problematic areas and explain the reasons of writing the task in that way they wrote.

3.6 Tasks

There were eight obligatory tasks that all the participants had to do for their portfolios and a free activity in which they would decide on the procedure. They were free to choose their own topics for the tasks.

When we explained the task to the students, they decided on their problem and wrote a topic sentence. Then, they wrote their first drafts and had self-evaluation and peer-edition section in which they used a checklist given to them by their teacher. After they discussed their paragraphs with their friends they had a chance to meet their teacher for conferencing about their paragraphs. In conference session, they found out the problematic or the best parts of their paragraphs by the help of reflective questions their teacher asked. We aimed to make them understand the tasks, become familiar with tutorial process and to be able to give feedback about the tasks during conferencing. We discussed the parts that the students had problems. We asked them some questions like “Why did you change this part?, What problems did you have while writing it?, Have you changed any parts?” in order to make them aware of their work.

The aim of conferencing session was not only to identify the problematic areas. We admired good sides of their writing.

The tasks were given below in detail.

3.6.1 Tasks for the First Semester

For the first semester, participants were asked to accomplish five tasks as shown in the following table:

Table 3.6.1 The tasks of the first semester

Tasks	Topics
Task 1	A description paragraph of a person
Task 2	An example paragraph
Task 3	A chronological paragraph
Task 4	A persuasive paragraph
Task 5	Free writing

Task 1- A description paragraph of a person: This was a task that required participants to describe one of their friends, either from their class or out of class. First, they chose a person they knew very well. Then in order to describe that person, they should decide on one of the headings from describing physical characteristics or behaviors and habits.

Task 2- An example paragraph: For this task, they supported their topic sentence by the help of exemplification. Using examples in a paragraph makes it more understandable than using general ideas. They were free to choose their own topics.

Task 3- A chronological paragraph: The participants were required to choose a topic for this paragraph. While they were writing their paragraphs, they gave list of events in order to have a chronologically ordered paragraph. Time sequence was important.

Task 4- A Persuasive Paragraph: For this task, participants were asked to choose a topic they were going to write to convince another person to either change or at least consider changing an opinion about something. Then they decided on the side they would support and wrote their first paragraphs. While they were writing their paragraphs they might use facts from a newspaper, Internet, or other reference book to

make their persuasion stronger. However, they should be careful about the facts since fact is true and can be checked by another person.

Task 5- Free Writing: The last task was to think more about their future plans related to their careers, to search about their department and to write a paragraph. The difference of this task was that they were free to choose the type they would use to write their paragraphs.

First they decided on their problem and had a problem statement which was followed by preparation of some questions they would ask to the students in the upper classes and to some of their teachers. Later on, they asked their questions and wrote their paragraphs depending on the answers and their own comments.

For this task, the participants were asked to be more reflective in their writing. After they wrote their paragraphs, before conferencing sessions, they were required to identify the best and worst parts of their paragraphs. By doing this, we aimed to foster their awareness and autonomy in writing their paragraphs. During the conferencing sessions, we realized that the participants were good at collecting the required data; however, they had difficulty in writing them. Some stated that they had problems in writing reflection sheets in which they were asked to write their experience while they were preparing this task. For these students who had some problems, we explained them how to do their task in detail.

3.6.2 Tasks for the Second Semester

For the second semester, the participants were required to accomplish five tasks. We informed our participants about the procedure we planned to use in this term. After they completed their paragraphs, we would collect them and gave them written feedback. When they had problems in any part of their writing they were free to come for a conference. There is a table below about the summary of tasks for the second term:

Table 3.6.2 Tasks for the second semester

Tasks	Topics
Task 1	A cause and effect paragraph
Task 2	A comparison paragraph
Task 3	A contrast paragraph
Task 4	A process paragraph
Task 5	Free writing

Task 1- A cause and effect paragraph: The first task was writing a paragraph in which there was a causal relationship between the topic sentence and supporting sentences. This meant that sentences that were used to support the topic sentence were list of either effects or causes. For this task, they wrote a paragraph focusing on cause.

Task 2- A comparison paragraph: This was a comparison paragraph in which they compared two related things they chose. Then they decided on the styles they would use to organize their paragraphs: Block or Point-by-Point. In Block Style, they should give all examples for one side of the comparison and then switches to the other side; however, in point-by-point style, they would compare item by item.

Task 3- A contrast paragraph: In a contrast paragraph, they contrasted two related things they chose. They concentrated on the differences between these things. They followed the same procedure as in Task 3 like deciding on topic and the style.

Task 4- A process paragraph: In a process paragraph, supporting sentences are arranged in a sequence to tell how something is made or done. To write a good process paragraph, good use of transitional expressions is necessary such as first, next, then, firstly, secondly, finally, after that, . .

For the fourth task, the participants were required to choose a topic for their paragraphs in which they would write the events step by step. They should be clear, use appropriate transitions, and include lots of specific and relevant detail. They had an aim in mind to explain the process in a good way that anyone can follow their example.

Task 5- Free writing: The fifth task required the participants to write an essay about the advantages and disadvantages of being a preparation class student. They were anxious about writing an essay as they had just a few experiences in writing an essay since in their writing course in preparation class, they were responsible for learning how to write a good paragraph. The last topic of the syllabus was a shift from paragraph writing to essay writing.

For this task, they decided on their problem and procedure of their writing. The next step was to choose their data collection tool. They decided to interview students in their classes. After finishing the interview, they started to analyze the results. While conferencing with the participants, they stated that they had difficulty in categorizing the answers they obtained from interviews. For this reason we demonstrated them how to make their analysis. When they finished data analysis, they wrote their essays including both the answers of the interviews and their comments.

When compared to the first semester free writing task, this time, the participants had less problems in data analysis and reflection parts. They stated that they were easily become aware of the problematic areas of their writing which shows their autonomy in writing.

3.7 The Assessment System

At preparatory class of the ELT Department of Çukurova University, learners had two midterm examinations for each semester, a total of four mid-terms for a year and a final examination at the end of the year (See Table3.7). For mid-term exams, two assessment types were used: sit-down examination and portfolio assessment. For the first mid-term assessments, the participants were required to choose two completed tasks from their portfolios to be evaluated. For the second mid-term assessments they selected four tasks. At the end of the second semester, they had a final exam consisting of sit-down examination and portfolio assessment.

There were different grading systems for the sit-down and portfolio assessment during the year. At the beginning of the year, we did not give the majority of the grades to the portfolio since in the first semester the participants were not familiar with portfolio

assessment (40 % for mid-term 1 and 50 % for the mid-term 2). However, in the second semester, they got acquainted with the system so their portfolios were graded differently (60 % for midterm 1 and 2).

At the end of the year, they had a final examination consisting of sit-down examination and portfolio assessment. This time, portfolios were at the center of assessment with 80 % grade. Following is a table to show the distribution of the grades:

Table 3.7 Distribution of grades

First Semester	Mid-term 1	Sit-down 60 %
		Portfolio 40 %
	Mid-term 2	Sit-down 50 %
		Portfolio 50 %
Second Semester	Mid-term 1	Sit-down 40 %
		Portfolio 60 %
	Mid-term 2	Sit-down 40 %
		Portfolio 60 %
	Final	Sit-down 20 %
		Portfolio 80 %

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS PROCEDURE AND CREDIBILITY

4.0 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give a detailed description of the procedure that we have taken during the analysis of our data collection tools. As stated in the previous chapter, we have data from mixed types: qualitative and quantitative data. Our qualitative data come from cover letters, reflection sheets and interviews. For the analysis of these qualitative data we used Cabaroğlu's (1999) procedure (See Figure 4.1). While analyzing our quantitative data coming from our autonomy level questionnaire and students' grades, we used some statistics.

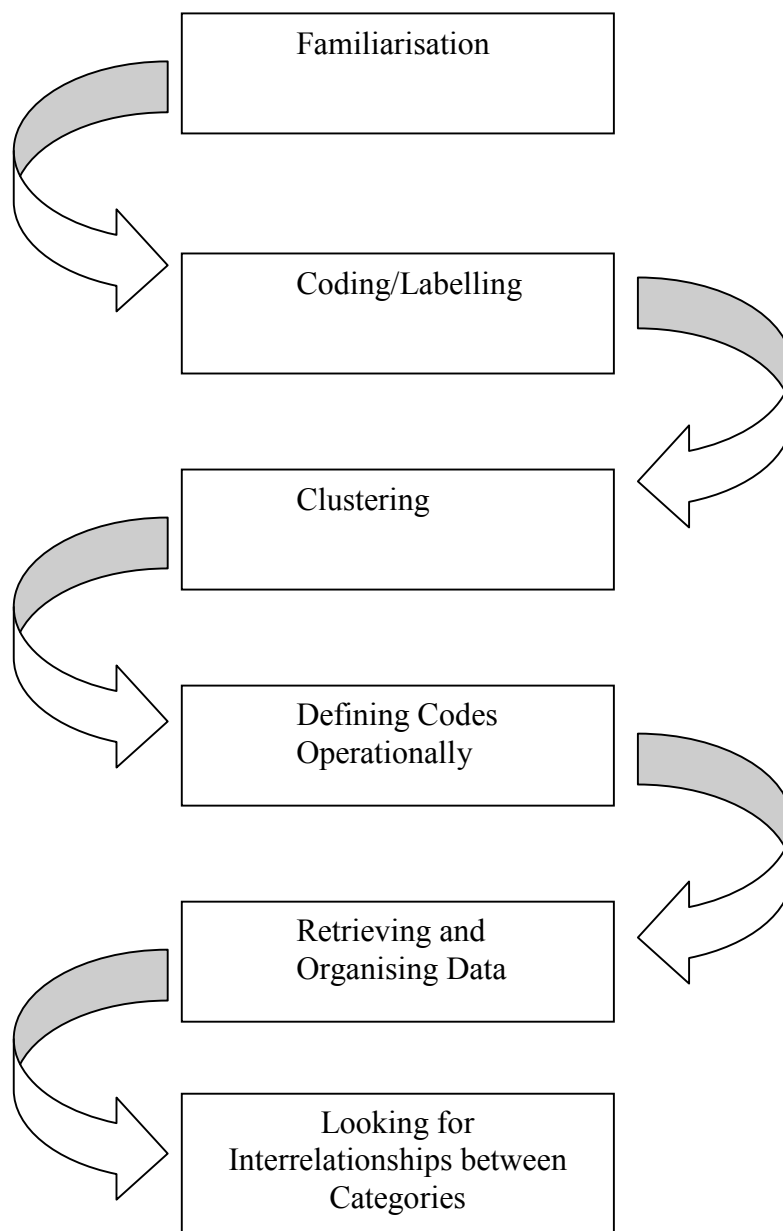


Figure 4.0 Simplified Overview of the Qualitative Data Analysis Procedure
(Cabaroğlu, 1999, 127)

4.1 Analysis of Interviews

Familiarisation

The first step of the analysis is the familiarisation with the interview data which aim to find answers to Research Questions 2 and 3. After conducting the interviews, we started the analysis of them which required the repeated readings of the verbatim transcriptions. Each time, a part of the data that seemed relevant to the research questions was underlined. While reading and underlying the relevant data, we kept in mind our purpose and the research questions of the study.

Coding/Labelling

Coding is a means of arranging the most meaningful parts of the data; in other words, a way of linking different but meaningful parts of the data (Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, in Cabaroğlu 1999). It means that we make categorization of the data depending on the data we collected from our participants. In the decision stage for coding an item, our criterion was that the same item or items should be repeated by the same participant or different participants more than once.

Clustering

After deciding on a code to constitute a category, it is time to cluster them. Miles and Huberman (1994), point out that clustering is deciding on the codes which went together under a category and which did not. According to them, clustering can be done in two ways, one of which is having a list of the categories at the very beginning of the study depending on the topic, research questions and related literature. In the other way, a researcher has no list. After collecting the data and reviewing them, codes emerge from the analysis. This study followed both of the ways. For analyzing the reflection sheets, we followed the second way: the researcher had no list before starting to collect the data. However, after data collection and analysis procedure, some other categories arose. For analyzing the interviews, we followed the first one. Before we conducted the

interviews we had a list of categories and we prepared our questions depending on them.

Defining Codes Operationally

The next stage after clustering the codes was defining them in order not to make any confusion and to make the meaning clear. The codes of this study were defined in the next chapter.

Looking for Interrelationship between Categories

After deciding on the categories, the next step was to try to find interrelationships between them. As a result of the analysis of the data, we had some subcategories.

4.2 Analysis of the Reflection Sheets and Cover Letters

Familiarisation

The same steps of the analysis of the interviews were used to analyze the reflection sheets that the participants gave at the end of each task and the cover letters given at the end of the implementation of portfolio. We had to write the documents on the computer which was time consuming for us. For some of the reflection sheets, we had to make translations since the participants were free to use either their mother tongue or the target language.

After writing the documents on the computer, we started to read them for many times to find out words or phrases that the participants used to show what they gained from that activity. As in the analysis of the interviews, while reading the data we underlined some parts to categorize the data.

Coding/Labelling

We aimed to find out repeated items to label them. It was hard to find recurring items, phrases or words as our participants were not used to reflect on what they wrote. So during the reflection stage, they only concentrated on the product. They were free to choose their own topics which made our work difficult to find repeated items.

Clustering

After coding the repeated items, we clustered them under a category. Our categories emerged after the analysis of the data.

Defining codes operationally

As a result of the analysis, we found different codes which were defined in the next chapter.

Looking for Interrelationship between categories

The same steps were taken as in the analysis of the interviews. After deciding on the codes and categories, we looked for the relationship between them.

4.3 Tactics for Testing and Confirming Findings

Miles and Huberman (1994, 262) state that “qualitative analysis can be evocative, illuminating, masterful- and wrong”. That means there is a problem in relying on the findings. In order to increase the confidence in the findings, various authors suggested many ways. The following tactics were used during the analysis of the data (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

4.3.1 Checking for Representativeness

In order to avoid wrong generalisations from specific instances in the data, sampling, generalizing and drawing inferences should be given more importance. Miles and Huberman (1994,264) give the potential risks and the sources of this kind as in follows:

Pitfall	Source of Error
Sampling nonrepresentative informants informants	overreliance on accessible and elite
Generalizing from nonrepresentative events or activities	researcher's noncontinuous presence at the site; overweighting dramatic events
Drawing inferences from nonrepresentative processes	heavy reliance on plausability good fit into emerging explanations;holistic bias

The first pitfall is related to the research design in which the source of error is 'overreliance on accessible and elite informants'. With regard to this, in the present study, we identified our participants by convenience sampling strategy as explained in Section 3.2. We chose two classes to implement portfolio assessment. By the help of convenience sampling, we chose 30 of them as our participants. Some of them were not eager to participate. However, they knew that they had to have portfolios in order to be assessed.

The second pitfall is about making generalisations from nonrepresentative events or activities due to the absence of the researcher in the field. For this present study, we do not accept this pitfall as the researcher was with the participants from the very beginning of the study to the end.

The third pitfall comes for the risk of drawing inferences from nonrepresentative processes. For our study, we did not take every item as a category. Several strategies may be applied to determine the categories. For this study, we had a criterion in mind that an item or a phrase should be repeated at least once to constitute a category.

4.3.2 Checking for Researcher Effects

Miles and Huberman (1994) state that there may be two sources of the researcher effect or bias. Firstly, the researcher may affect the case and secondly, the researcher may be affected by the case. In order to avoid the researcher's effect on the case, the researcher should spend as much time there as possible; that is, spending time in the class and out of the class and talk about everything not only about the topic.

For this study, as the researcher was the instructor, we had a chance to meet very often. These times were sometimes for a course, sometimes for a coffee break and sometimes for a picnic. The place we interviewed was generally the researcher's office and the department library. Sometimes a coffee break was an interview time for us. So we saw that choosing social places motivated our participants.

From the beginning of the study, all the participants knew that they were in a study. We also explained them the purpose of the study, how the data would be collected and used.

4.3.3 Triangulation

Denzin (in Cabaroğlu, 1999) states that there is no single method superior to the other. Every method has its own strengths and weaknesses. In order to compensate for the weaknesses of each approach or method, a combination of methods should be used. In this way the weak points are minimized. This is what is called in literature as triangulation. Denzin also gives four types of triangulation: 1) data triangulation 2) investigator triangulation 3) theory triangulation and 4) methodological triangulation

In this study, we used first one as a source of triangulation which required the use of more than one data collection tool. We believe that data from different sources enrich the study. So while collecting the data by the help of different tools, we had the same purpose in mind.

4.3.4 Getting Feedback From Participants (Member-Check)

Cabaroğlu (1999, 164) notes that getting feedback from participants is “one of the most frequently advised strategies to be applied to test the findings in the literature on qualitative research” It gives the participants a chance to see the categories created and analysis done and the results found at the end of the study (Lincoln and Guba cited in Cabaroğlu, 1999).

Taking into the consideration the implications of this tactic, we decided to show the findings to the participants. As the researcher was at the same time their instructor, they did not have difficulty in coming together. After the analysis of their portfolios, they met for the findings of the study. It was a kind of presentation which started with a short summary of the study including the purpose. Then the participants, the data collection tools and the procedure we followed were explained to the participants. Then they were given an evaluation form to evaluate the findings and make comments on them.

28 of the participants were ready for the presentation of the findings as the researcher distributed them in the second hour of their writing course. Two were absent that day. However, they were told that they had a chance to see the results whenever they wanted and filled the form. They came to the researcher’s office and filled the forms.

The table below shows the distribution of the participant’s opinions about the categories created before depending on the analysis of the data:

Table 4.3.4 Feedback from the participants on findings

	I don’t agree	I don’t know	I agree
Feedback on findings of the interviews	-	3	27
Feedback on findings of reflection sheets and cover letters	-	-	30

In addition to these forms, there were also some written comments that the students give to show either the findings were correct or some wrote about the topics they do not agree.

Some comments included:

“I think you are on the right way. The categories are all right”

“I was surprised when I saw some of the categories you found as a result of interviews”

“I want to thank you for your presentation. Now I do not have any questions about your study. I understand the study very well.”

“I agree that portfolio helps to improve our writing skills.”

“I feel better after I completed each task in a portfolio. Because I see that I can improve my writing skill by the help of portfolio”

“I agree with the category of ‘awareness’ with some subcategories. Because by the help of portfolio I was aware of my abilities in writing”

4.4 Analysis of Autonomy Level Questionnaire

This questionnaire was prepared by Camilleri (1996) (see Section 3.4.3). In order to analyze the data, we entered the data obtained from this questionnaire into SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) and calculated their means and standard deviations to see the difference between the pre and post questionnaires. From SPSS, Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Rank Test have been used in order to find out if there is a change in their levels of autonomy and to see if this change is statistically significant.

4.5 Analysis of Task Grades

In order to see whether there is an improvement in the participants’ achievements in writing skill or not, we gave grades to each task. While we were reading the tasks we had writing rubrics to assess them. When we finished reading all the tasks, we asked two of our colleagues to assess them again in order not to have any questions about assessment. Then we analyzed the participants’ grades they took from the tasks they

prepared for their writing portfolios to see if writing portfolio leads to this improvement, The results will be shown in detail in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter we aimed to give a detailed explanation of the analysis of the data we gathered by the help of interviews, reflection sheets, cover letters, questionnaire and task grades. Each data collection tool's results will be given in a different section in which relevant examples from the participants will be provided.

5.1 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of Reflection Sheet 1

Reflection Sheet 1 was written after the completion of the first task in which the participants were required to describe one of their friends, either from their class or out of class. After they wrote their paragraphs they were asked to write a reflection sheet for that paragraph. As stated in Chapter 4, we code the repeated items and then we clustered them into categories. Following is a figure which shows the categories and subcategories we constituted as a result of the analysis of the Reflection Sheet 1.

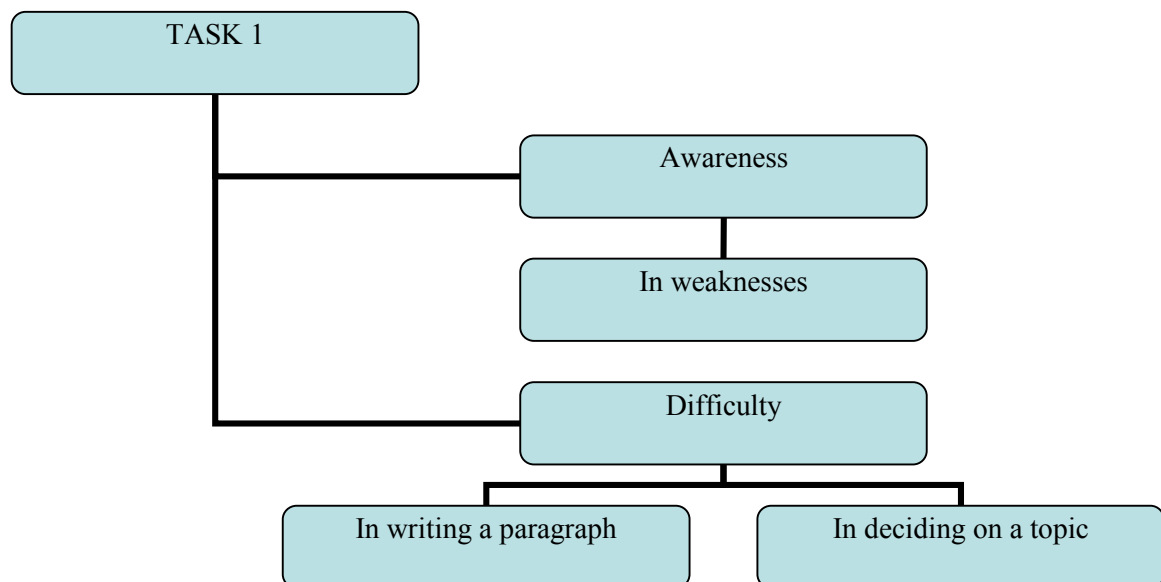


Figure 5.1 Results of the Reflection Sheet 1

As seen from the figure, two categories were identified with their subcategories which will be described in the following sections.

5.1.1 Awareness

We used ‘awareness’ in this study in the meaning that one observes his/her feelings, thinking, strategies s/he uses while writing. It was clear in the participants’ reflections that they were always thinking about the procedure they were in and the tasks they were doing. They were always criticizing themselves. Most of them stated that before coming to university and before being conducted an implementation of portfolio, they were given a topic which required them to write a paragraph and read it in the classroom. However, after the implementation of portfolio and by the help of the Task 1 they began to think much more about doing their work. While analyzing their reflection sheets, we realized that they were aware of their weaknesses. Following are some example excerpts from students’ reflection sheets:

P15: ... What is reflection? It is nonsense for me to reflect on what I wrote. When I looked at my paragraph I cannot find any mistakes.

Reflection Sheet 1

P25: ... When I wrote my paragraph, I thought that it was excellent. But now I am reading it and I see that there are a lot of grammar mistakes. I understand that I need to use some conjunctions like on the other hand, while... etc. In my next paragraph, I am going to be more careful about my grammar mistakes.

Reflection Sheet 1

P30: ... Wow, there are a lot of mistakes in my paragraph. Oh my God, I think I am not a good writer.

Reflection Sheet 1

Depending on their comments, we can say that our participants perceive reflection as finding the errors of their paragraphs. We thought that they might have misunderstood the term because of our description. So we decided to give extra time to the term ‘reflection’ before the 2nd task.

5.1.2 Difficulty

In this study, ‘difficulty’ was used in the way that learners had some problems either in the preparation stage or in the writing stage of the paragraph. Following is an excerpt

from participant 23 who started self-questioning. This shows that the participant is dealing with his own learning.

P23: ... When my teacher told us that we were required to write paragraphs during this year I didn't know what to do because I didn't have writing classes during my high school years. So there are lots of questions in my mind like "What am I going to write? How am I going to write? What is a good paragraph? What will I do if I cannot manage it?"

Reflection Sheet 1

Participant 14 is also asking 'How' questions about doing this task. It is an indicator for her feeling responsibility for her own learning. Below is an excerpt from her reflection:

P14: ...I was afraid of writing classes at the beginning of the year. Because my teacher told us that we are going to decide on the problems for our paragraphs. I was in a short panic. How? Before coming to university, my teachers gave us the topic and the problem then we wrote our paragraphs. I didn't understand why we decide on the problems.

Reflection Sheet 1

Participant 18 has good comments on what she did. She had difficulty in writing a paragraph since she thought that writing a paragraph was just to jot down what comes to her mind about a given topic.

P18: ... In high school years, when my teachers told us to write a paragraph about a given topic, I finished it in 10 or 15 minutes. Because I just wrote down what came to my mind. However, when I wrote my first draft, in a conferencing session, my teacher didn't like it and told me that I need to use some conjunctions to have a coherent paragraph. And I have to limit my topic. She said that writing a paragraph does not mean talking about everything related to the topic. Each paragraph has only one topic.

Reflection Sheet 1

5.2 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of Reflection Sheet 2

For the second task they were required to write an example paragraph for which they were free to choose their own topics. As a result of the analysis of Reflection Sheet 2, we realized that the participants were more relaxed while they were writing their reflection sheets and had much more things to say. Awareness is one of the categories we came up with. But this time we identified that our participants began to comment on the strengths of their paragraphs. Other category we identified was improvement in which it was regarded as an improvement in grammar use and paragraph writing, specifically in putting sentences in a related order in paragraphs. They began to use fewer irrelevant sentences. Following is a figure having the categories:

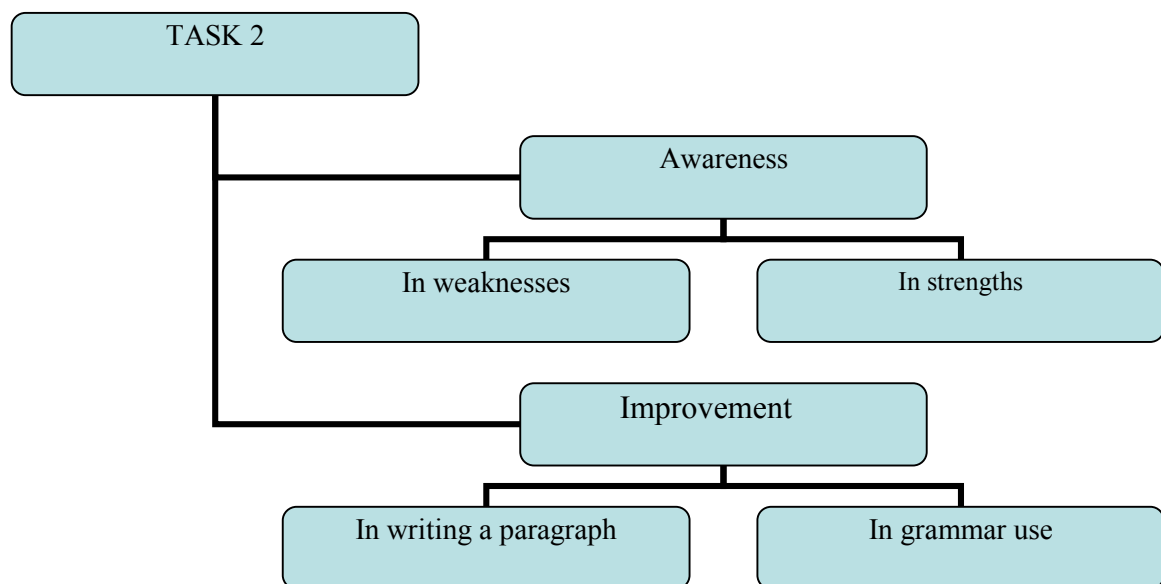


Figure 5.2 Results of the Reflection Sheet 2

5.2.1 Awareness

Unlike the Reflection Sheets 1, in the analysis of the Reflection Sheets 2, we identified that our participants were aware of both their weaknesses and strengths in their writings. By looking at the following excerpts, we can easily say that the participants began to criticize themselves:

P12: ... While writing the first draft, I did not give much importance to my writing since we just wrote about a given topic. However, after I had peer-evaluation I started to be more careful about my writing.

Reflection Sheet 2

P5: ... When my teacher asked me to decide on the topic I was in a panic since I was used to be given everything ready for writing. Then I started to think in a fast way and began to write. At the end of the task, I realized that I can do it.

Reflection Sheet 2

P11: ... First I was in a panic since I don't believe that I can do it without help. First I decided on the person but there are a lot of things to tell about him. So it is time to limit my topic. When I finished the task, I realized that everything goes on perfectly. There is no need for being panic. I have the ability but I did not aware of it.

Reflection Sheet 2

From P5 & 11's reflection we can easily say that they were dependent to the teacher but after doing the tasks they realized that they could do it.

As a result of the analysis of the reflection sheets, we observed that the participants concentrated on their paragraphs rather than reflecting on what they gained or what they learned from these tasks.

5.2.2 Improvement

Almost all the participants stated that they improved their writing paragraphs. As it is a broad term to define, they did not give the names of the areas they improved. However, they used the term in a positive way and noted that:

P6: ... I realized that I can decide on the problem by myself, do brainstorming about the topic and write an outline of my paragraph which made my way easier.

Reflection Sheet 2

P1: ... At the beginning of the semester, when our teacher told us that we would write reflection sheets after each task, I was angry because I did not use to write about what I have done. When I sat for writing it I did not know what to write. However, when I finished it, I realized that there is an improvement in my thinking when I compared myself at the beginning of the semester.

Reflection Sheet 2

Participant 1 noted that there is an improvement in her reflecting on what she writes.

P27: ... While I was writing before coming to university, I did not give importance to grammar because my teachers did not correct them. However, at university in my writing course my teacher gives importance to every point of my paragraphs. So I was careful about my grammar use in my paragraphs. In this paragraph, there are not any grammar mistakes. So I am happy.

Reflection Sheet 2

5.3 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of Reflection Sheet 3

In Task 3, the participants were asked to write a chronologically ordered paragraph. We identified two categories: awareness and motivation. Following is a figure of the analysis of Reflection Sheet 3:

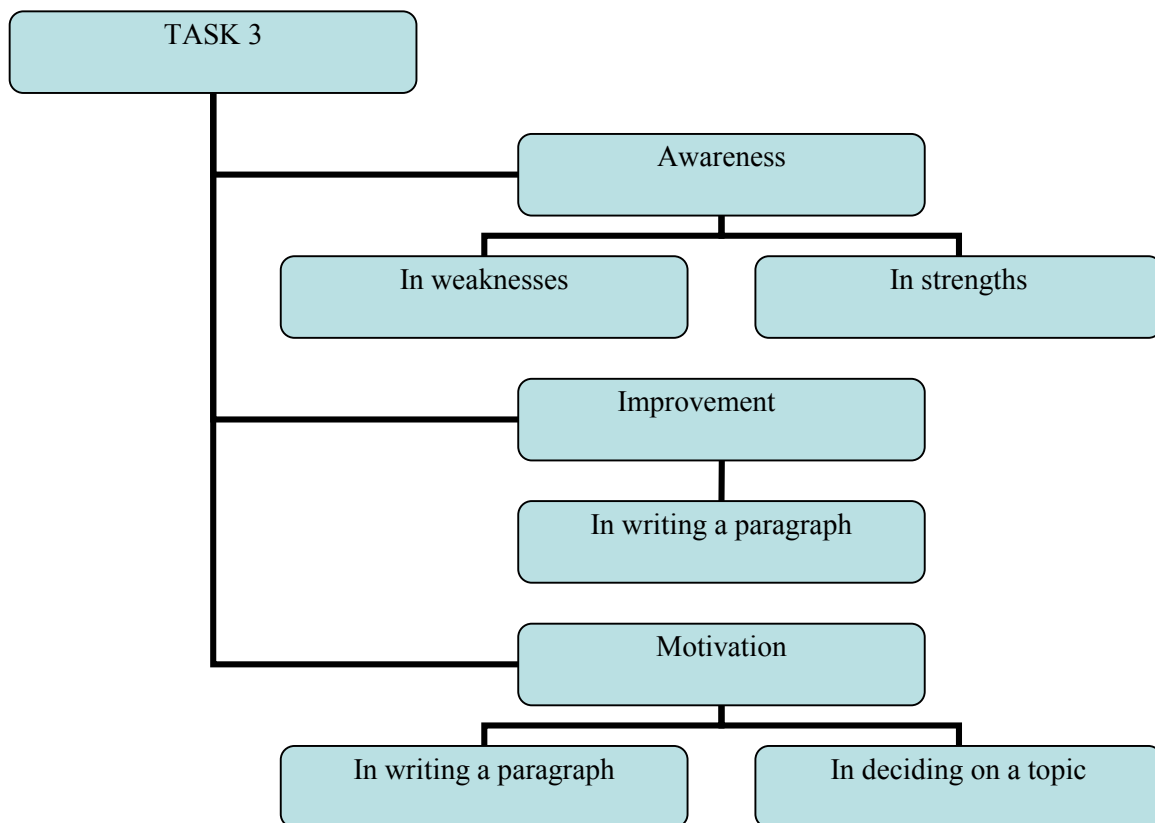


Figure 5.3 Results of the Reflection Sheet 3

5.3.1 Awareness

For the category of awareness, we can say that the participants were good at commenting on their paragraphs. They began to concentrate on their weaknesses and strengths in their writings which made us happy since reflection is not only finding the errors. Here are some excerpts:

P17: ... I can do it. I wrote a paragraph and this time when I looked at it there are not many mistakes. This time I connected my sentences with appropriate conjunctions. I think that is OK this time.

Reflection Sheet 3

P2: ... I wrote a paragraph and now it is time to reflect on it. But this time it seems perfect. There are grammatical mistakes. I should correct them.

Reflection Sheet 3

Our participants began to be aware of themselves and began to criticize themselves. They started to see their weak points and tried to create solutions to solve them. This gives us an idea of their being responsible for their own learning process.

5.3.2 Improvement

The participants noted the improvement they had in their writing paragraphs. They stated that they had difficulty when they were asked to write. However, it has become easier to write a paragraph. Here are the examples:

P3: ... It is a good feeling to have fewer problems while I am writing.

Reflection Sheet 3

P16: ... I am really happy to read my paragraph again and again. I cannot find more errors. I am writing better paragraphs.

Reflection Sheet 3

5.3.3 Motivation

This category made us happy as the participants stated that they were eager to write and happy to write. This is how we define motivation for this study.

P22: ... When I see that I can write paragraphs free of errors, I am happy. I don't want to see a lot of errors on my paper since they make me feel bad. But now I am interested in writing. I am excited.

Reflection Sheet 3

P21: ... Writing becomes exciting for me. Thanks a lot!

Reflection Sheet 3

P13: ... At the beginning, it was boring for me to write. But now I like writing.

Reflection Sheet 3

P10: ...Until coming to the university, I hated writing. It was boring for me. But now I like it. This may be because of the teacher, the textbook, my friends or the

tasks we do in the classroom. Whatever the reason is I start to enjoy my writing class.

Reflection Sheet 3

At the beginning of the semester, while we were talking with our participants about what they thought about writing course, we found that they perceived writing as a burden and found it boring. However, depending on their reflections, we can easily say that there is a change in their feelings towards writing. They begin to ask questions about the reasons of this change. As Participant 10 states, they began to enjoy their course.

5.4 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of Reflection Sheet 4

Task 4 was to write a persuasive paragraph. From the analysis of their reflection sheets for this task, we identified two categories as in the analysis of Reflection Sheet 2: awareness and improvement. In Reflection Sheet 2, awareness was in grammatical level and the participants just talked about their strengths and weaknesses. However, in these reflection sheets they began to make comments on what they gained as a result of this task. In the analysis of Reflection Sheets 2, we realized that the participants focused on grammar use and writing a paragraph for improvement. However, in Reflection Sheets 4, we identified that they began to give importance to putting sentences in an order and in having coherence in their paragraphs. In the previous tasks, there was no relationship between the sentences. Their paragraphs were a combination of unrelated sentences. However, in the fourth task, we see that they learned to put their sentences in a coherent order. The number of the conjunctions they used in their paragraphs began to increase. Below is a result of these sheets:

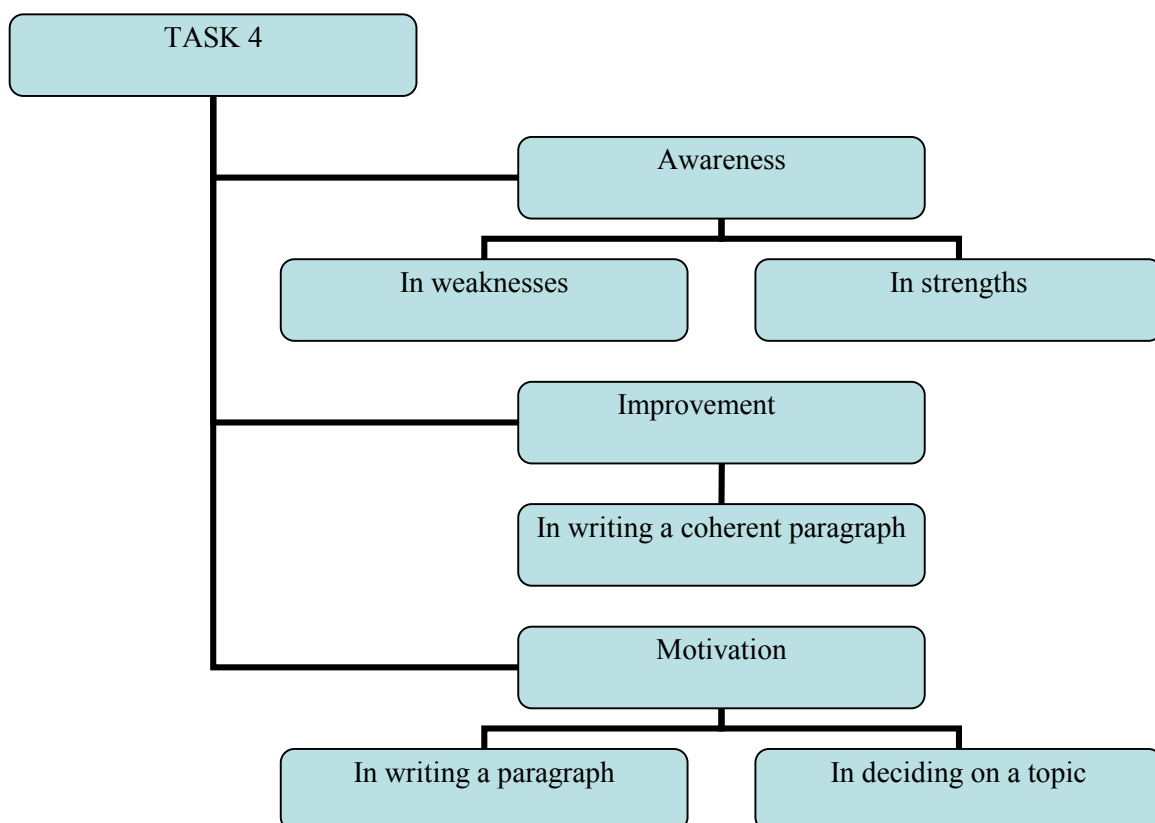


Figure 5.4 Results of Reflection Sheet 4

5.4.1 Awareness

After they completed their tasks, they realized that they were all aware of their strengths and weaknesses and their abilities to persuade other people on any topic as seen in the following excerpts:

P6: ... Persuading other people? It seemed difficult to do it. What can I do? How can I do it? These were the questions for me to be answered. I thought that I couldn't do it. It was not easy. But when I finished my paragraph, it didn't seem to me very bad.

Reflection Sheet 4

P12: ... There are some mistakes in my paragraph but still good points are more than weak points.

Reflection Sheet 4

P24: ... When I read my paragraph again and again, I see that there are a lot of good sentences in my paragraph. I made fewer errors. Day by day I am writing a good paragraph. I began to criticize myself.

Reflection Sheet 4

Depending on the reflections of the participants we can say that they were aware of the fact that reflecting on a piece of writing is not finding the errors or the good points of it. They began to talk about what they gained from this task. As P24 stated, they began to criticize themselves.

5.4.2 Improvement

As a result of the analysis of these sheets, we found that the participants generally perceived improvement as having fewer errors and having paragraphs with relevant sentences. P7, P8 and P19's reflections showed that they were all aware of their grammatical errors and irrelevant sentences in their paragraphs. Here are some examples of their feelings:

P7: ... When I compare my first paragraph and this fourth one I see that there is a big gap between them. I didn't like my first writings. There was no relationship between my sentences. But when I look at my last paragraph to persuade a person about a topic, I understand that my sentences are related to each other although there are some mistakes.

Reflection Sheet 4

P8: ... No more grammatical errors!

Reflection Sheet 4

P19: ... What a good feeling to write a good paragraph. At the beginning of this semester, I did not believe that I am going to like and manage to write. Now I like my paragraphs. While I am reading my paragraphs, I don't want to tear the paper. Instead, I say OK. I wrote paragraphs with no irrelevant sentence. I learned that using conjunctions in a paragraph made it fluent.

Reflection Sheet 4

5.4.3 Motivation

The participants pointed out that they were more eager to write when they saw that they began to have fewer grammatical errors in their paragraphs. P12, P25 and P10 had similar comments in their reflection sheets that they wrote for this task. Here are their comments:

P12: ... I want to write because the number of the grammatical errors in my paragraphs has begun to decrease.

Reflection Sheet 4

P25: ... No more grammar errors!

Reflection Sheet 4

P10: ... My motivation increases when I see that there are not more grammar errors in my paragraphs.

Reflection Sheet 4

5.5 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of Reflection Sheet 5

Task 5 was about writing a paragraph in a style they wanted. They were required to think about their future careers and search about their departments. Their teacher did not tell them the type of their paragraphs. They were free to decide on both the topic and the type of their paragraphs. Responsibility was a new category that was raised aside from awareness, improvement and motivation (figure 5.5):

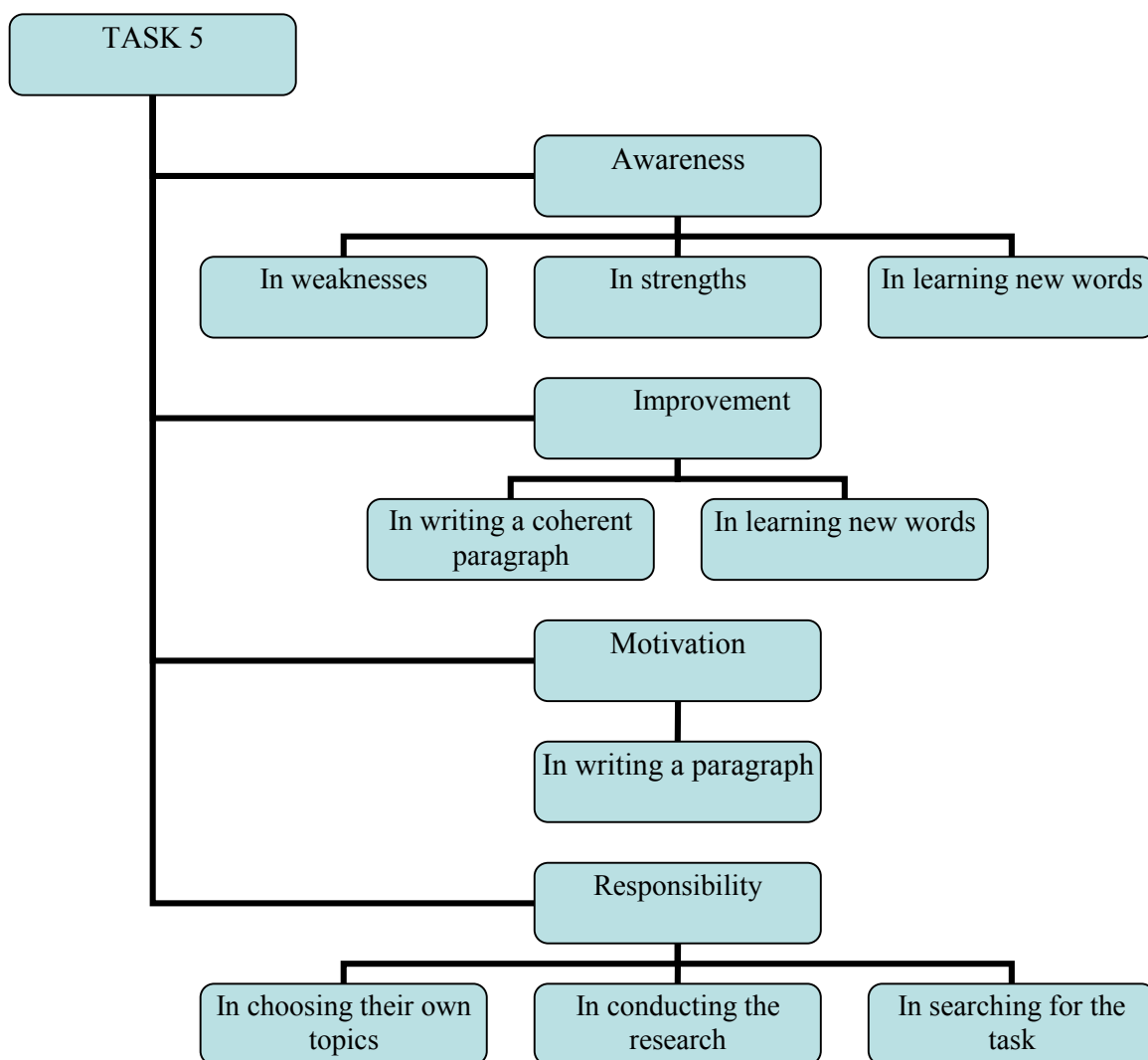


Figure 5.5 Results of the Reflection Sheets 5

5.5.1 Awareness

Our participants were aware of themselves. They could easily say the weak or strong points of their writings. Some of them realized the importance of using new and different vocabulary. They were also aware of the fact that they learned something from their writings which were shown in the following examples:

P12: ... When I look at all my paragraphs, I see that I managed to decrease the number of the weak points in my writings.

Reflection Sheet 5

P19: ... Wow, I can write! I can do it! This time my teacher found less error.

Reflection Sheet 5

P23: ... It is a good feeling to write a paragraph with no errors

Reflection Sheet 5

P1: ... I had to learn new vocabulary to make my paragraph attractive. I want to take other people's attention to my paragraph. I can do it by learning and using new and different vocabulary. I realized that learning more vocabulary is important to improve my writing skill.

Reflection Sheet 5

P30: ... New Vocabularies! Yes , I had to learn more new words in order to finish my paragraph.

Reflection Sheet 5

The participants knew their weaknesses and created solutions for them. As P1 stated, in order to have an attractive paragraph, she should use different vocabulary.

5.5.2 Improvement

In the fifth task, they realized that they improved themselves in writing their paragraphs. They were capable of writing coherent paragraphs. They did not use unrelated sentences in their paragraphs. They gave importance to using the appropriate conjunctions for their paragraphs. When they saw the improvement in their writings they became happy and motivated.

P27: ... This paragraph is very important for me since there are not so many mistakes. In the previous paragraphs, my teacher said that I need to use more conjunctions. Now I use them in appropriate places.

Reflection Sheet 5

P3: ... I began to write paragraphs with a few errors.

Reflection Sheet 5

P3 was happy since he began to write paragraphs with a few errors. Another participant stated that she was in a panic at the beginning of the year but now she improved her writing skill:

P5: ... It was unnecessary to be in a panic when I wrote my first paragraph with a lot of unrelated sentences. But now I am happy. I wrote my fifth paragraph. I chose my topic and I did my outline. My teacher liked it and I wrote my paragraph. I learned new vocabulary necessary for this paragraph and this improved my writing skill. Yes, I did it.

Reflection Sheet 5

P4: ... I am pleased with doing this activity because it has a lot of benefits for me and for my friends. Being free in writing is very enjoyable. While I was searching for this activity I realized that I need to learn new words.

Reflection Sheet 5

As can be seen from the reflection of P4, she was aware of the fact that some vocabulary items were a must for this activity. She still found the activity enjoyable.

Another participant pointed out that when he finished writing this task, he learned some new words. To illustrate:

P 25: ... The things I gained while I was writing this task were to choose my topic, to choose the words I need and to learn new words.

Reflection Sheet 5

5.5.3 Motivation

Having paragraphs with few errors and being able to write a coherent paragraph made our participants motivated to write. Most of them stated that they became eager to write when they saw that they could write about a topic, even they could plan the preparation stage for their paragraphs including decision about the topic and the type of the paragraph.

P18: ...That's it. I can write paragraphs.

Reflection Sheet 5

The following paragraph is from a participant's reflection sheet who is happy to have this kind of task and who is motivated to do better:

P27: ... After deciding on the topic, preparing an outline, preparing the questions and searching for the people to whom I am going to ask the questions, the only thing that was in my mind was being happy. When I think about the things I did for this activity, I am happy that I can do it. I am sure that I can do better activities.

Reflection Sheet 5

P10: ... Being able to write paragraphs free from errors is unbelievable for me. I think, I learned something beneficial for me.

Reflection Sheet 5

P16: ... I am excited about doing different tasks in my writing course. I am not just a student in this class. I felt myself as a researcher while I was doing this task.

Reflection Sheet 5

Depending on P16's thoughts, we can say that she was excited and happy to do this task. She also noted that she stepped out of being only a student in her class.

5.5.4 Responsibility

Responsibility was another category emerged as a result of the analysis of Reflection Sheets 5. The participants felt themselves responsible for what they did and learned. Choosing the topics by themselves and starting to do their work without much help from their teachers or friends gave them the feeling of responsibility which was important for us in order to have independent learners. Taking responsibility and being independent learners were important key words in order to have autonomous learners. If the participants took the responsibility for their own learning, they began to ask why,

when, what, where, and how questions. The answers of these questions would make the participants aware of their learning process. The following excerpts reveal the responsibilities that the participants take during the preparation of this task:

P13: ... What a difficult job to decide on a topic for my paragraph! I should think about everything necessary for writing a paragraph. But this time it is beyond writing a paragraph. I should organize every step for my research. When I finished it I felt tired; however, I was happy.

Reflection Sheet 5

Depending on the reflections of P13, we can say that he begins to have responsibility in choosing his topic. P18 and P28 had interesting reflections about their tasks. They stated that until they started to search for the task, they did not know how to use school library.

P18: ... Through this activity, I learned to use internet and school library. In order to decide on the topic, I had to search about it. I went to the library so I learned the procedures we should follow in a library. Then I searched my topic from internet by writing key words.

Reflection Sheet 5

P28: ... The teacher told that we were going to decide on the topic and the type of the paragraph, the questions to be asked and the people we were going to interview. For this task, I thought that I was not a professional researcher. I began to think about every step but I was in a panic. Then I put the events in an order and made a list of the things to be done. I started to search about the topic in the library. But I need help in the library. So I learned to use school library. Despite these difficulties, I enjoyed doing this task. I felt myself useful.

Reflection Sheet 5

5.6 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of Reflection Sheet 6

This was the first task of the second semester which required the participants to write a cause paragraph. Organization was a new category for us that rose aside from improvement and responsibility. Below is a result of these sheets:

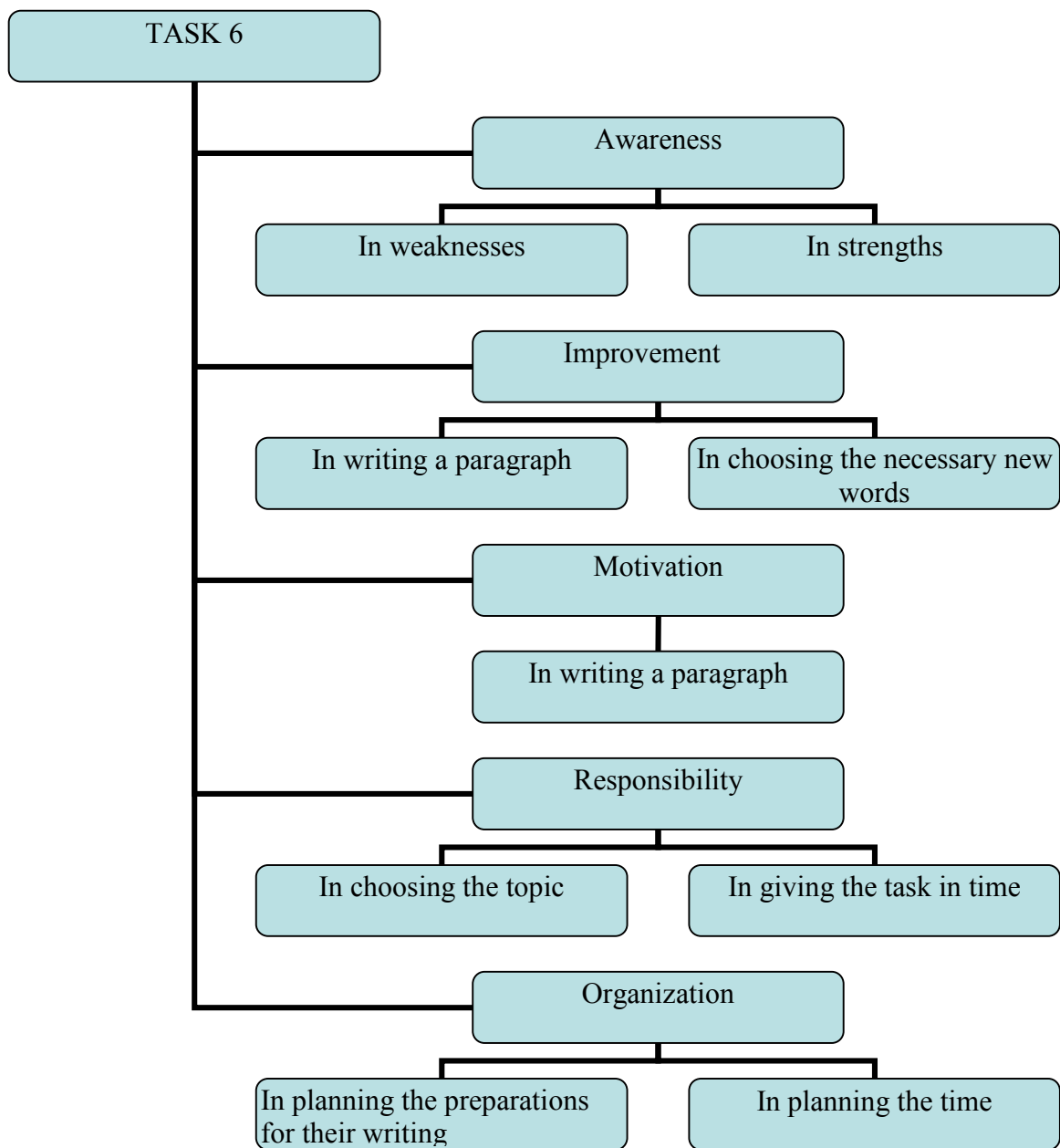


Figure 5.6 Results of Reflection Sheet 6

5.6.1 Awareness

As in the analysis of the previous reflection sheets, awareness was a category we came up with since the participants were aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Depending on their perceptions about themselves, they began to have decisions about their weak points. This was important for their improvement in their writing skills and their being autonomous learners. Here are the excerpts:

P16: ... I understood that I need to improve myself in planning my self in order to give my task in time. I have problem in planning. What can I do for this? I should answer this question ☹

Reflection Sheet 6

Depending on P16's reflection, we can say that she began to criticize herself.

P29: ... I have difficulty in writing long sentences. I hate having short sentences in my paragraph. I need to learn how to use conjunctions.

Reflection Sheet 6

5.6.2 Improvement

Improvement is the other category that we identified nearly in all the analysis of the reflection sheets. In the analysis of the Reflection Sheets 6, it emerged in two ways: improvement in choosing the necessary vocabulary and improvement in writing a paragraph. First one was important for us since it showed us that our participants began to be critical about their choosing necessary vocabulary. They were aware of the fact that the use of different vocabulary enriched their writings. Below are some examples from their reflection sheets:

P12: ... I need to learn more words to have an interesting paragraph.

Reflection Sheet 6

P24: ... When I look at my previous paragraphs, I do not like them. They are very simple. So I need to make some changes on my last activity. I should use more attractive vocabularies.

Reflection Sheet 6

The results made us happy since our participants were on the way of improving themselves and being critical.

5.6.3 Motivation

As a result of the analysis of the reflection sheets for this task, we were not surprised to find out motivation as a category. The participants were happy to have fewer grammar errors in their paragraphs which affected their motivation towards writing a paragraph. Here are the examples:

P20: ... Wow, I began to have better paragraphs. I feel good.

Reflection Sheet 6

P1: ... I find myself thinking about my portfolio and my paragraphs when I am busy with other things not related to my writing course. I have begun to enjoy my course.

Reflection Sheet 6

5.6.4 Responsibility

Responsibility was a category we came up with in the analysis of the Reflection Sheets 5 and 6. As for the analysis of the Reflection Sheets 6, we can say that the participants were aware of their responsibilities in giving their tasks in time. While they were commenting on their paragraphs, they became aware of their responsibilities in handling the task in time. The following excerpts showed us their thoughts about taking responsibility for their tasks:

P12: ... Trying to finish my task in a given time is an extra stress for me. I thought that I could not finish it. But I did it. I planned myself in this time and I planned the time so I finished....

Reflection Sheet 6

P15: ... My mother was shocked when she saw me trying to finish my homework in time. I was not a successful student in planning my time. But I learned to do it while I am writing my paragraphs. I finished my task in time.

Reflection Sheet 6

5.6.5 Organization

Organization was a new category we had as a result of the analysis of the Reflection Sheets 6. This category made us happy since organization was important in a portfolio. Learners should be organized in order to fulfill their portfolios. They should finish the tasks within defined dates. They should collect all the products they have done so far. One of the participants revealed her thoughts about organization:

P18: ... I cannot stop being organized. It is in the nature of portfolio. It is not important whether you are organized or not, portfolio makes you organized. I learned to organize my steps in writing a good paragraph. I worked hard and finished it in time.

Reflection Sheet 6

P2: ... I had a problem about the use of time for an activity. I rarely finished a task in time. However, I finished this paragraph in time because I made a list of the things I was going to do. I followed this list and that's all.

Reflection Sheet 6

As P2 stated, she had a list of the things she was going to do which was a kind of organizing herself. She concluded that as a result of her being organized, she finished her paragraph in time.

5.7 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of Reflection Sheet 7

The second task of the second semester was about writing a comparison paragraph. The participants were responsible for the style they would use to organize their comparison paragraphs: block or point-by-point (see Section 3.6.2). After analyzing the reflection sheets for this task, we identified that, as in previous tasks, our participants were aware of their improvement in writing a paragraph and in using different vocabularies in their paragraphs. But in Reflection Sheets 7, there was an improvement in different skills. Most of them indicated that their improvement in writing a paragraph and in using different vocabularies affected their speaking skill. The second category, responsibility, was not new for us; however, in the analysis of the Reflection Sheets 7, their responsibility was for deciding on the style they were going to use to write their

paragraphs. For the third category, the participants' talking about their success to reflect on their writings was new and surprising for us since they complained about reflecting on their paragraphs in our conferencing sessions in the first semester. However, as a result of the analysis of their reflection sheets for this task, we found out that most of the participants were happy to comment on what they wrote. The following figure shows the results of the seventh task:

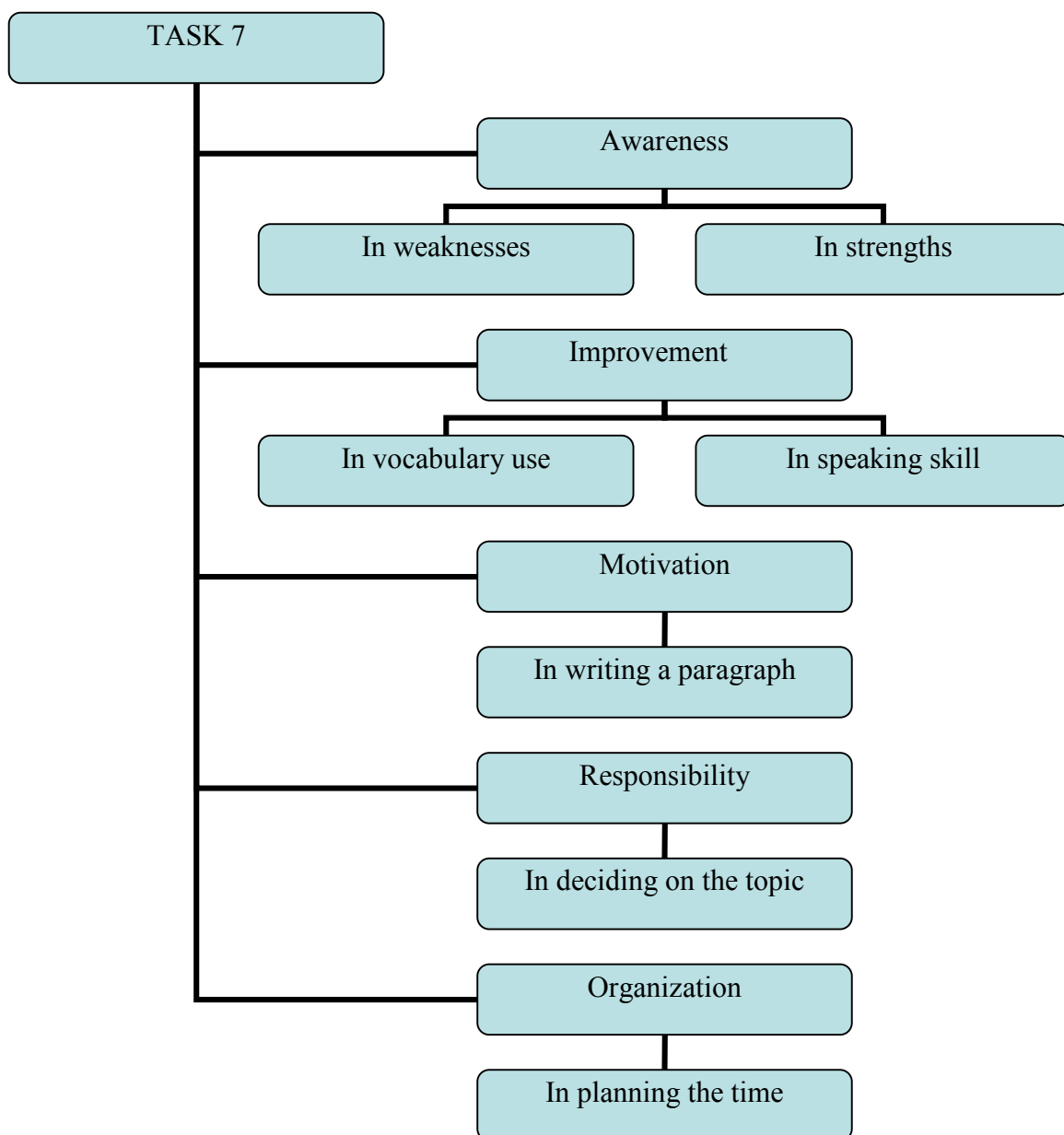


Figure 5.7 Results of Reflection Sheet 7

5.7.1 Awareness

It was great for us to see that our participants were all aware of their weak and strong points in their paragraphs. Here are the excerpts:

P2:... I know that I have the ability to write. But I haven't known it before. Because my previous teachers just gave me the topic and asked me to write. While I was writing, if there was an unknown words or if I could not remember

a word, my teacher gave me the meaning and I wrote it in my paragraph. But I could not able to learn their meanings.

Reflection Sheet 7

As can be seen from P2's reflection, she became aware of her ability to write. Similarly, P13 had a comment about her being aware of her own capacity to write:

P13: ... I am a good writer. Now I can write on any topic because I realized that I can write.

Reflection Sheet 7

5.7.2 Improvement

In Reflection Sheets 7, the participants stated the importance of their improvement in their speaking skills as a result of the improvement in their vocabulary knowledge. Below are some of the examples from their reflections:

P27: ... I can easily say that my vocabulary improved a lot. This affected my speaking. Now, while I am talking about a topic, I am using different words which make my speaking fluent.

Reflection Sheet 7

P19: ... It is unbelievable. I do not have to stop very often to think about a word. I can speak fluently. I learned a lot of words while I am writing my paragraph. I can use them while I am speaking.

Reflection Sheet 7

5.7.3 Motivation

As a result of this task, our participants pointed out how motivated they became in their reflection sheets. Here are the examples:

P22: ... I enjoy my writing course because I know that I can be successful in this class and I can learn something from writing.

Reflection Sheet 7

P23: ... Wow, while I was a high school student, if somebody told me that I was going to enjoy writing class, I directly said “IMPOSSIBLE”. But now I cannot believe in my thoughts. I like writing.

Reflection Sheet 7

5.7.4 Responsibility

The participants commented on their effort to give the task in time. They had also reflections about their responsibilities for deciding on the style they were going to write their paragraphs. To illustrate:

P3: ... This activity provided me the feeling of responsibility. I learned to do something in time.

Reflection Sheet 7

P16: ... Trying to finish a task in a limited time is both frustrating and enjoyable. I was in a panic but at the same time I was sure that I could do it. Having time limitation teaches me to be responsible and to finish the task in time.

Reflection Sheet 7

P29: ... The most difficult stage for me was to decide on the style. Block or point-by-point? Then I chose the second one. I thought that it would be more effective to state my reasons point-by-point.

Reflection Sheet 7

P12: ... I chose to write my paragraph in a block style. It was the most painful stage for me to decide on the style. But I did.

Reflection Sheet 7

Following reflection is really a good example to show the participants' feeling themselves responsible for their own learning. P1 gave a metaphor to explain his thoughts:

P1: ... I thought myself as the driver of this car. A driver is responsible for everything while s/he is driving a car. I was responsible for the preparation of this paragraph and I had no accident. Congratulations!

Reflection Sheet 7

5.7.5 Organization

The participants commented on their becoming more careful about planning the time for the task. They noted that portfolio enabled them to be more controlled in planning themselves for their tasks. Here are the examples:

P5:... I should be more careful about planning my time. I know. This is what I was not familiar with in my high school. But I am a university student and I should learn to plan my time.

Reflection Sheet 7

As can be seen from P5's thoughts, they were aware of their need to plan their time to finish their task in time.

5.8 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of Reflection Sheet 8

Now it is time for the participants to reflect on the contrast paragraphs they wrote as the third task of this semester. As in Task 7, they were responsible for choosing their topic and the style of their paragraphs: either block or point-by-point. As a result of the analysis of their reflection sheets for this task, we came up with awareness, improvement and organization. In the category of awareness, the participants were aware of their need to learn new vocabularies. They had to find different ways to improve their vocabulary. As for the improvement, we identified that they were searching for different strategies to learn new vocabularies. Organization is the other category emerged from the analysis of the reflection sheets. The participants mostly indicated that they began to act in a planned way. Below is the figure with the results:

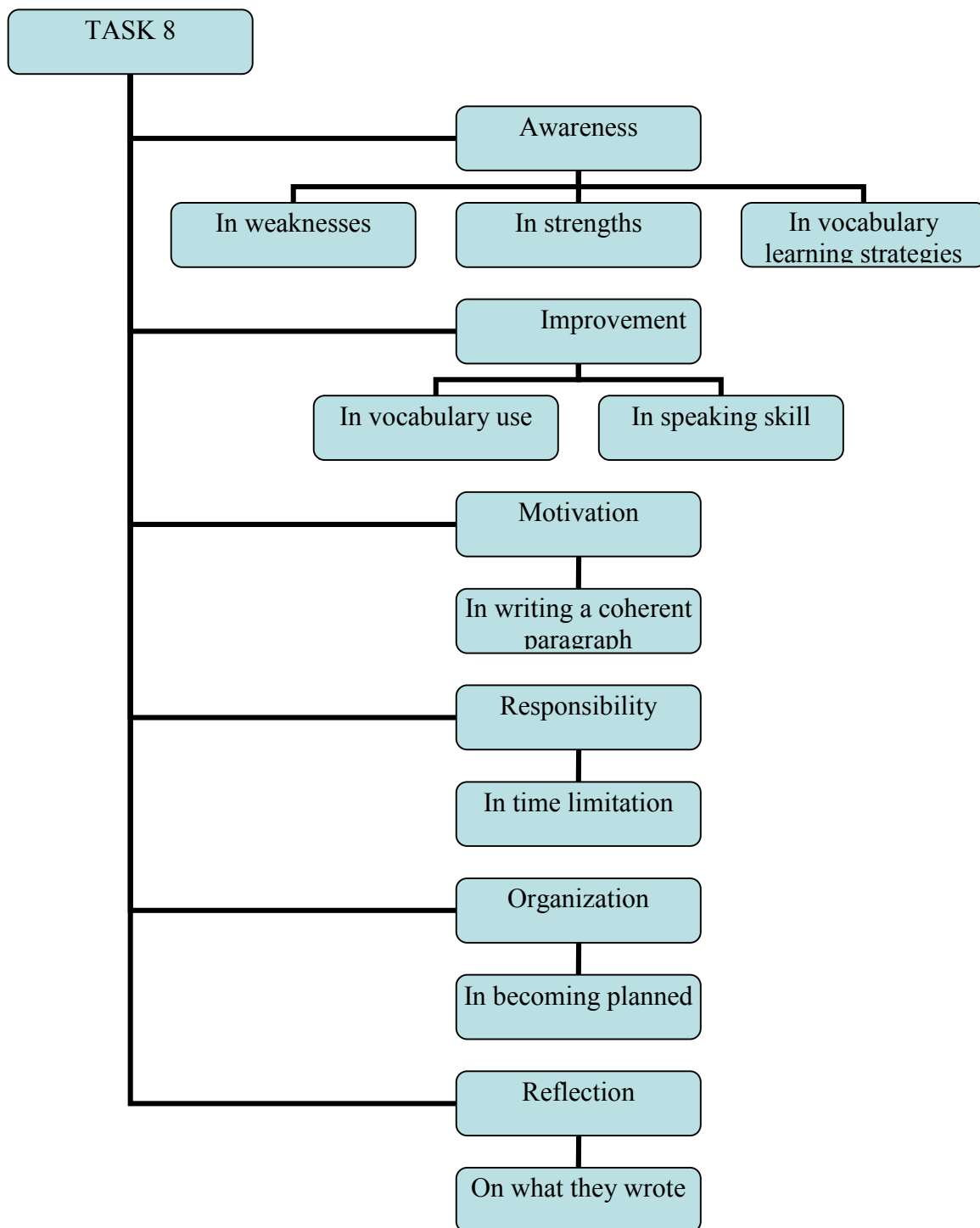


Figure 5.8 Results of Reflection Sheet 8

5.8.1 Awareness

This was not a surprising category for us. Our participants were aware of their strengths and weaknesses in their paragraphs. As a result of this task, they realized that they had to search for different ways to learn new vocabularies since they wanted to use different and attractive words in their paragraphs. Here are some excerpts:

P23: ...More words! Yes, I had to learn more words to make my paragraph effective. But how?

Reflection Sheet 8

P21: ...I started to learn new words because I had difficulty in writing an interesting paragraph.

Reflection Sheet 8

P2:... I should learn new words to make my paragraph interesting and attractive.

Reflection Sheet 8

P4: ... I should find enjoyable ways to learn new words because I do not like learning new words.

Reflection Sheet 8

5.8.2 Improvement

The participants talked about a different kind of improvement in their writing course. They indicated that as a result of this task they became aware of their need to find new vocabulary learning strategies. Their searching new strategies to learn new words showed us that they dealt with their own learning and began to take charge of it. Here are the examples:

P17: ... My vocabulary improved a lot through the activities I have done. I learned to use my dictionary in a fast way. In order to learn a new vocabulary, it is not necessary to learn its meaning. I use it in a sentence and I learn it. This is what I learned during the activities.

Reflection Sheet 8

P25: ... How can I learn more words in a short time?

Reflection Sheet 8

As it is understood from the participants' excerpts, we can say that they try to find different strategies to learn new words which are a sign of their becoming independent from their teachers.

5.8.3 Motivation

The participants indicated that they were becoming more motivated towards their writing course as a result of the tasks they were doing. In their reflection sheets for this task, they had similar comments about being motivated. Here is an example excerpt:

P15: ... It is a good feeling. I am writing more coherent paragraphs and this makes me happy. I have begun to enjoy my writing class.

Reflection Sheet 8

5.8.4 Responsibility

Most of the participants were responsible for time limitation. Their being responsible was an indicator of their improvement through being independent learners.

P8: ... Having a time limitation is an advantage for me. I learned to plan the stages of writing my paragraph.

Reflection Sheet 8

P16: ... Time limitation is necessary for a task. In this way we learned to finish the activity in time. It is my duty to handle it in time.

Reflection Sheet 8

5.8.5 Organization

Within this category, the participants stated that they became planned which made their writing a paragraph easier. They also added that they began to spend less time on the task and the procedure. Here are the examples:

P24: ... Thank you my teacher. I realized that I had spent much time on my work since I did not plan myself. But now I am planning my work and I start doing it. I have extra time for my other activities.

Reflection Sheet 8

P13: ... I can't believe myself. I had a lot of things to complete my task but now I had time to go out.

Reflection Sheet 8

When we looked at the comments of the participants, we understood that they were aware of the benefits of being planned. Another student reflected on his activity in a different way:

P26:... Organization and me. I can't think myself with this word. But now I can't believe it. I am becoming planned. I plan the things I am going to do and then I have time to spend with my friends. When I think about me in previous years, I understood that I wasted my time. For this task, I planned myself in order to finish it in time. I had a plan in my mind and I obeyed it. The result is good for me.

Reflection Sheet 8

5.8.6 Reflection

Reflection was a surprise for us since we did not expect to find out it in the analysis of the reflection sheets. During the first semester, the participants had questions about reflecting on what they wrote. However, the results of the analysis showed us that they began to be critical about their own learning which was important in becoming autonomous learners. Their success in reflecting on their paragraphs was a sign of their taking charge of their own learning. Here are some examples:

P15: ... Reflection. This word made me afraid at the beginning of this year. However, through the activities I have done I learned that I could learn from my errors.

Reflection Sheet 8

P18: ... In the first semester I thought that reflecting on my paragraphs is just finding the errors in them. But now, I understood that it is not. I should reflect on both good and bad sides in my paragraphs. For this activity, I see that it is a good idea to write my comparison paragraph in a block style. I stated my ideas in a clear way.

Reflection Sheet 8

P29: ... At the beginning of the year, the idea of reflecting on a task was nonsense and useless for me. But now I realized that I learn to write perfect paragraphs when I analyzed my paragraphs. I am happy that I have not grammatical errors in this paragraph. However, I it would be better to use more different vocabulary.

Reflection Sheet 8

5.9 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of Reflection Sheet 9

For the ninth task of this year, the participants were required to write a process paragraph. Some of the students did not like to write process paragraphs since it was difficult to find suitable topic for it. The most striking category we came up with as a result of the analysis of Reflection Sheets 9 was self-confidence. The participants indicated that they began to feel less frustrated while they were writing. They also indicated their improvement in speaking skill as a result of their improvement in their writing course. The following figure shows the results of the analysis:

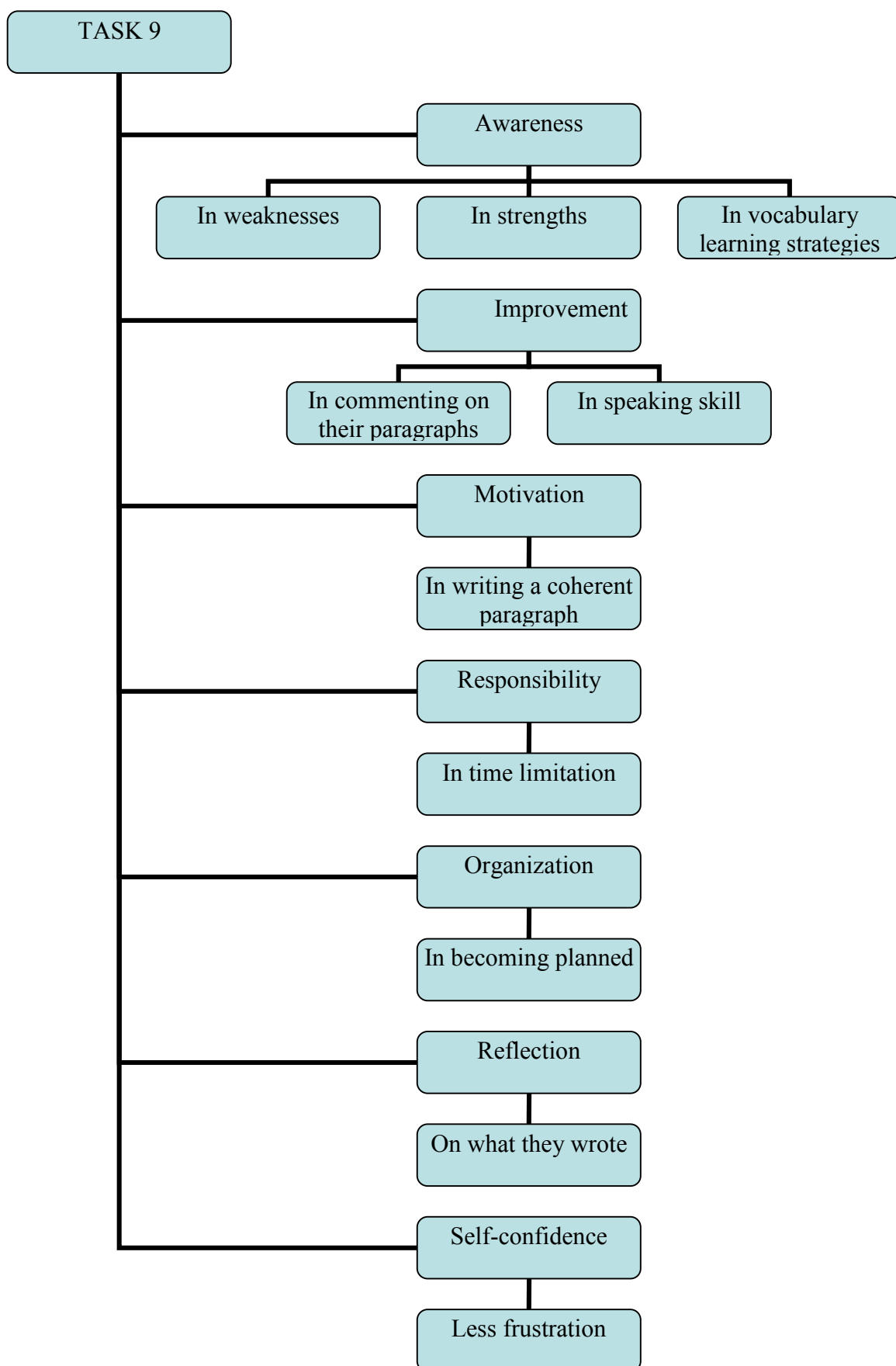


Figure 5.9 Results of the Reflection Sheets 9

5.9.1 Awareness

The participants all focused on their giving importance to the vocabulary learning strategies besides being aware of their strengths and weaknesses. Here are the examples:

P22: ...I have always a question in my mind. How can I learn more words? Because this is necessary to improve my writing paragraphs.

Reflection Sheet 9

P4: ...I can easily realize my weak and strong points in my paragraphs.

Reflection Sheet 9

As can be understood from P22 and P4's comments, they know what they need to improve themselves.

5.9.2 Improvement

For this task, our participants talked about their improvement in speaking and in commenting on their paragraphs. As in the previous analysis of the reflection sheets, they stated that they were good at speaking as a result of the improvement in their writing skills and vocabulary. They also indicated that they began to comment on what they wrote in a better way:

P24: ... When I looked at my vocabulary log, I understood that I learned a lot of new words during my writing sessions. For this activity, I had to check new words from the dictionary. This helped my speaking. Now I can use different words in my speeches.

Reflection Sheet 9

P20: ... I can speak fluently as a result of the improvement in my writing. Because I learned to organize my sentences in a paragraph. While I am speaking, I also organize my sentences.

Reflection Sheet 9

P13: ... While I am reflecting on my paragraph, I feel more relaxed. I am not anxious about finding only the errors.

Reflection Sheet 9

5.9.3 Motivation

Our participants were more motivated and eager to participate in the activities we did in their writing course. To illustrate:

P2: I like my writing course, my teacher, my friends and of course my portfolio.

Reflection Sheet 9

P7: ... I enjoy my writing class.

Reflection Sheet 9

Depending on P2 and P7's comments we can say that they have become more motivated towards their writing course.

5.9.4 Responsibility

Being responsible was necessary in a learning process since a responsible learner was aware of ready to do something for his or her learning. Following excerpt is about a participant's thoughts about the responsibility he has for his own learning:

P4: ... What should I do to improve my paragraph writing? I should try other ways.

Reflection Sheet 9

P4 was aware of his responsibilities as a learner. Another participant was aware of her responsibility in handling the task in time:

P20: ... I was in a panic first because I had a limited time. But it was good for me since I control and plan myself according to this limitation.

Reflection Sheet 9

5.9.5 Organization

The participants were more planned when we compared them with their positions at the beginning of the year. They also stated this in their reflection sheets they wrote for this task:

P5: ... I cannot believe myself sometimes. I am always planning something and I finish them in time. Thanks portfolio!

Reflection Sheet 9

5.9.6 Reflection

As we stated before, reflection was of great importance for us to foster learner autonomy. As a result of the analysis of this task, we had reflection as a category. We realized that our participants were more relaxed to comment on what they wrote. To illustrate:

P6: I realized that I am learning something while I am reading my paragraphs again and again.

Reflection Sheet 9

P11:... It is easier to find the errors in my paragraphs now.

Reflection Sheet 9

As P6 and P11 indicated the participants were ready to reflect on their paragraphs.

5.9.7 Self-confidence

The participants were aware of the fact that they became less frustrated when it came to write their paragraphs. Some of them pointed out that they began to realize their learning from their paragraphs. They also did not see writing paragraphs as homework. To illustrate:

P25: ... I did not like process paragraph writing. However, I realized that I could do it. This showed me that I learned a lot during my writing class.

Reflection Sheet 9

P10: ... At first, I did it since it was one of my homework. But during my preparation for this task, I realized that I can do it even if I didn't like the topic.

Reflection Sheet 9

P20: ...Is it me? Wow, I can do it. I can write paragraphs although I do not like the topic. For this activity, it is very boring for me to write a process paragraph. However, when I finished it, I understood that I could do it.

Reflection Sheet 9

5.10 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of Reflection Sheet 10

The last task of this semester was free writing which was about the advantages and the disadvantages of being a preparation class student. The difference of this task was that the participants were required to write an essay which was a shift from paragraph writing to essay writing. So they were anxious. When they finished their task, they stated that it was a good experience for them to write an essay about a topic.

When we analyzed their reflection sheets for this task, we were happy to have results like their being aware of themselves, their improvement in their writing skills, their being organized and their being self-confident. Below is the figure with the results:

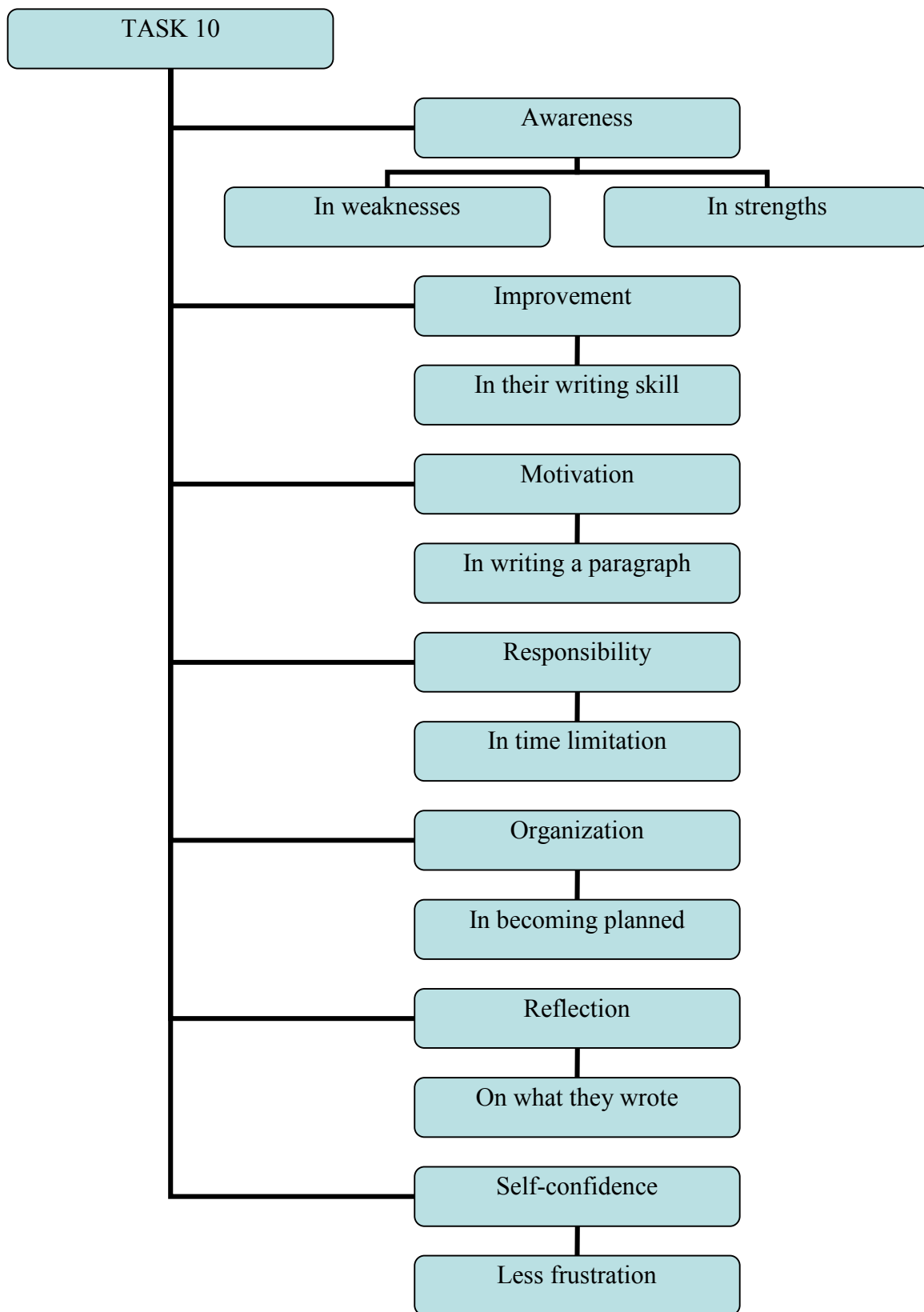


Figure 5.10 Results of Reflection Sheet 10

5.10.1 Awareness

This was the category we came up with in all the tasks. This showed us that our participants were aware of their strengths and weaknesses which was important for us since we wanted to raise their awareness towards themselves.

P12: ... I felt bad when I heard about writing an essay. But I did not afraid. When I think about myself at the beginning of the first semester, I realized that I improved myself a lot in my writing skills. I realized that I did not have difficulty while writing my essay. I had difficulty in commenting on the results. But by the help of my teacher, I finished it.

Reflection Sheet 10

P8: ... This task showed me that I can do many things in my writing course. I understood that it was nonsense to afraid. At the beginning of the year, I could not write even a paragraph. Now I wrote an essay.

Reflection Sheet 10

5.10.2 Improvement

This was another category that we were not surprised to have. Almost all of the participants indicated their improvement in their writing skills. Following is an example from their reflection sheets:

P13: ... I learned many things in my writing course. Especially writing an essay was a big step for me since I wrote more than one paragraph which should be related to each other.

Reflection Sheet 10

P30: ... writing an essay was new for me. Because I had difficulty in writing a paragraph and now I was required to write more than one paragraph. When I finished my essay, I understood that I learned a lot in this course. It was not difficult for me to write my essay. The most difficult stage was to decide on the things I was going to write in each paragraph.

Reflection Sheet 10

The following participant had a different reflection:

P17: ... I felt myself as a researcher. I interviewed with my friends and I wrote the results with my comments. It was a good experience for me to improve myself.

Reflection Sheet 10

5.10.3 Motivation

The participants were aware of their being more motivated by the help of portfolio and the tasks. They pointed out in their reflection sheets they wrote for this task that their motivation increased as a result of portfolio. Here are the examples:

P28: ... I had the feelings fear and frustration when I was first asked to keep portfolio. However, as the days passed, I have begun to enjoy my writing class.

Reflection Sheet 10

Similarly;

P18: ... In my high school, I did not like my writing courses. It was boring to write and read it. Then the teacher corrected my mistakes and I felt bad. But now I enjoy writing. The reason can be my teacher. Because she does not directly correct me in front of the class or she does not put red labels on my paper. Instead, she waits for me to see my mistakes. Then she gives a chance to my friends to correct the mistakes, if any. Then in conferencing session, she asks me to find out the problematic areas in my paragraph or she asks the reason of my using a word in a sentence. While I am explaining it, I unconsciously correct myself. So I like this method. Thank you teacher.

Reflection Sheet 10

P18's comment about being motivated is a bit different in that she says that her teacher and the method she uses change her negative attitude towards writing.

5.10.4 Responsibility

One of our aims to conduct this study was to have autonomous learners so this is an important category for us. We know that an autonomous learner is aware of his/her responsibilities. The participants of this study stated that they learned to handle their tasks in time. They also became responsible for all the stages of their writing task like deciding on the topic, having an outline, writing the drafts and writing the final version. To illustrate:

P27: ... I had a lot of responsibilities for this activity. After I had decided on the topic, I prepare my interview questions. I analyzed them and started to write my essay. But it was not very easy. I categorized the results by the help of my teacher and decided to talk about each topic in a single paragraph. This was the thing I learned in this course.

Reflection Sheet 10

5.10.5 Organization

Our participants pointed out that they became more organized by the help of the activities we did in their writing course. They realized it while they were writing their first essays since they had to write more than one paragraph which required their being organized.

P2: ... Writing an essay made me afraid at first but when I organized the steps of my essay writing, I relaxed.

Reflection Sheet 10

P5: ... I could not help being organized while I was writing my essay. At the beginning of the year it was difficult for me to write a paragraph but now I wrote an essay. I had a list of steps that I should follow. I made this list. I followed it and I had good results.

Reflection Sheet 10

5.10.6 Reflection

Being reflective was a problematic area for the participants at the beginning of the year. However, as a result of this task, we understood that they started to become more reflective. Here are the examples:

P30: ... While I am writing a paragraph, I am controlling myself. I am first thinking about the things I am going to write then I start to write. Then I read it to check it. In this way I have better writings.

Reflection Sheet 10

As can be seen from P30's comments, they were aware of being reflective for the sake of their own learning.

5.10.7 Self-confidence

While we were analyzing the reflection sheets for this task, we identified our participants' becoming self-confident. When we asked them to write a paragraph at the beginning of the year, they complained about everything. They stated that they were not going to be writers in future. It was useless to learn how to write a good paragraph. They said that they could not do it. However, as a result of this task, we can say that they feel less frustrated when they are asked to write something.

P6: ... I did not feel bad when I heard about writing an essay. I knew that I could do it. The difference was that I was going to write more than one paragraph and it was difficult for me. I had to organize different paragraphs which should be related to each other.

Reflection Sheet 10

P23: ... I do not afraid to write an essay since I believe in my ability to write. During the year I understood that I could write better paragraphs.

Reflection Sheet 10

P7: ... When I finished my essay, I realized that it was useless to be anxious. I learned a lot of things about writing which would be useful for me in writing.

Writing an essay was a different experience for me. At first, it made me feel bad since it was not like writing a paragraph. The paragraphs in my essay should be related to each other. So first I did brainstorming and I organized my thoughts. After this stage, I realized that it was not difficult to write for me.

Reflection Sheet 10

5.11 Summary of the Results of the Reflection Sheets

When we finished analyzing all the reflection sheets that the participants wrote during the year, we realized that they were all aware of the benefits of using portfolio in their writing course. Following table gives a short summary of the results of the reflection sheets:

Table 5.11.1 Results of Reflection Sheets

	Awareness	Difficulty	Improvement	Motivation	Responsibility	Organization	Reflection	Self Confidence
Task 1	+	+						
Task 2	+		+					
Task 3	+		+	+				
Task 4	+		+	+				
Task 5	+		+	+	+			
Task 6	+		+	+	+	+		
Task 7	+		+	+	+	+		
Task 8	+		+	+	+	+	+	
Task 9	+		+	+	+	+	+	+
Task 10	+		+	+	+	+	+	+

We can easily say that the participants were aware of themselves from the beginning of the study. Day by day they began to feel the difference in their improvement of their writing abilities. This motivated them so much and they began to be more responsible for their course. As they improved themselves, they became more self-confident. They started to be more reflective towards themselves.

Apart from these, Table 5.11 reflects that our participants find the portfolio implementation difficult at the beginning of the process. This is something expected because they were not familiar with such a system and keeping a portfolio, receiving continuous feedback from their friends and teacher sounded frustrating to them at the

beginning. However when they started the process, when they started to observe their improvement, this burdensome work of portfolio assessment was not a primary concern of them. They focused on its positive effects on their progress. They even became motivated at the 3rd task.

Another positive outcome of this study is to see that our participants started to be organized at the beginning of the second term. Being organized is undoubtedly something essential for a learner. Thus, we can conclude that our participants have gained lots of features that would be expected from an autonomous learner.

5.12 Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of the Cover Letter

Cover Letter was one of our main data collection tools to observe students' improvement and autonomy. It had two parts. In the first part, participants were asked to write their autobiographies at the beginning of the implementation. This was not analyzed since our aim was just to have more information about our participants. The second part was of great importance for us which was written at the end of the implementation. It gave the participants a chance to think about what they learned during the implementation, how they learned it, what they gained and whether or not there was a change in their views towards writing. In their reflection sheets, they commented on each task however, cover letters gave them the opportunity to reflect on the activities as a whole.

As a result of the analysis of the cover letters, we have different categories which are shown in the following figure:

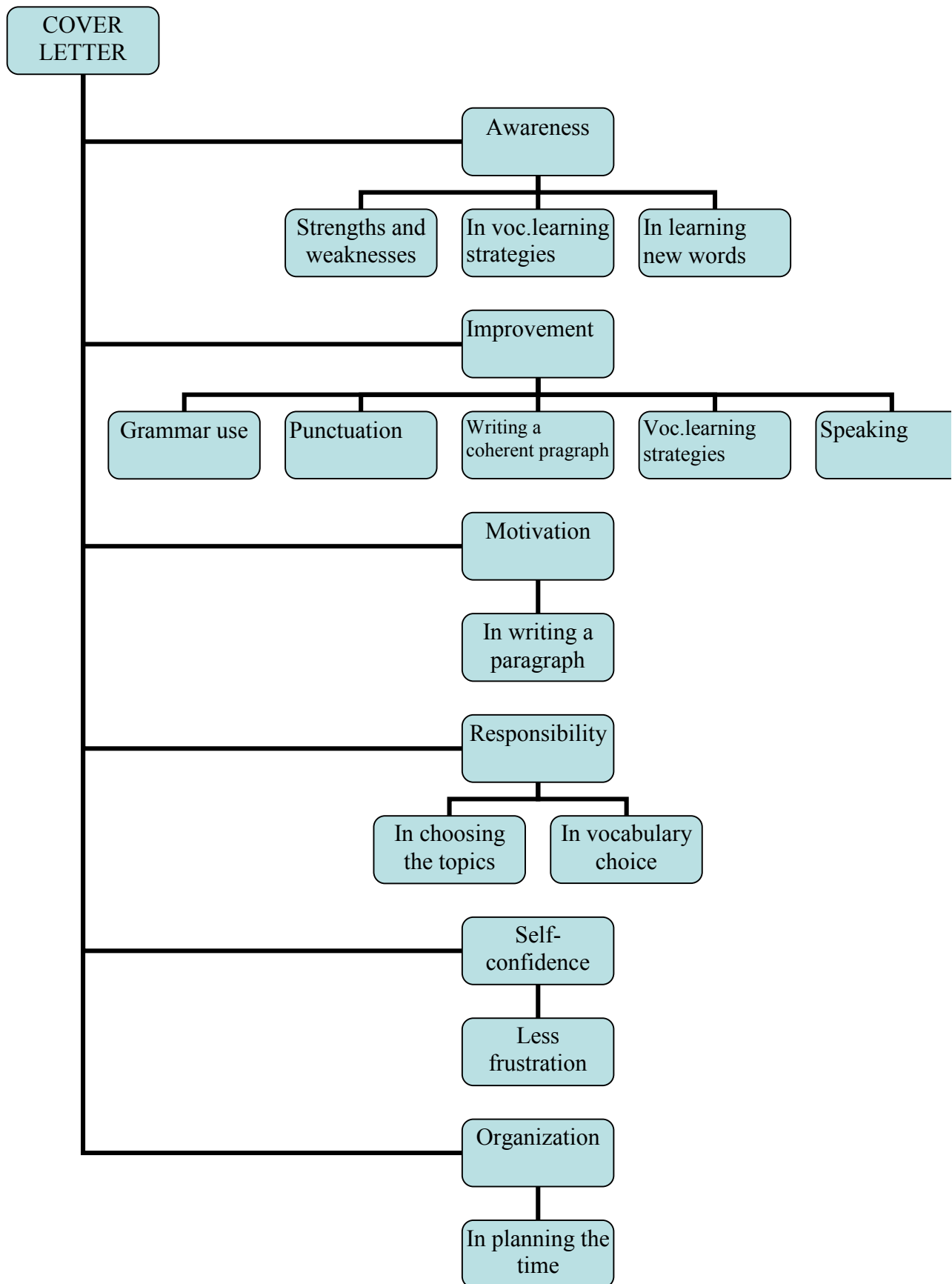


Figure 5.12 Results of the analysis of the Cover Letters

5.12.1 Awareness

Awareness is not a new category for us. We came up with this term in almost every reflection sheet for the activities. As a result of the analysis of the cover letters, we found out that the participants became aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They tried to find solutions for the problematic areas they had in their paragraphs. Depending on their awareness, they took decisions for the following activities. One of our participants stated that she was not aware of her ability in writing:

P23: ...Until coming to university, writing was an area that I could not be successful. I could not write good paragraphs so I hated this course. However, after I started to have writing courses at my university, I realized that I could write paragraphs, even essays. I am sure that writing will not be a problem for me in the future.

Cover Letter

P23 was aware of his ability to write and he was sure about a fact that he would not have any problems in the future related to writing. P13 explained her awareness in her learning new words. She recognized that she had problem with the use of new words in her paragraphs:

P13: ... Up to now, I haven't given much importance to using new vocabularies in my paragraphs since I did not like writing. Furthermore, I did not believe that I would learn something from my paragraphs. However, after I had started to write paragraphs in my writing course I began to feel that there was something missing with my paragraphs. I was always repeating the same words which made my paragraphs boring. I should use new and interesting words.

Cover Letter

Another participant's awareness was related to vocabulary learning strategies:

P3: ... Using the same words in a paragraph seemed bad when I read my paragraphs. Instead, I should learn and use new words. But how? I realized that when I used a word in my paragraph I did not forget its meaning. I hate learning

words by memorizing their meanings. So when I learn a new word, I try to use it in my sentences which is more meaningful for me.

Cover Letter

She realized her weakness in learning new words and started to give much importance to learning and using new words.

To sum up, these excerpts showed us that our participants began to be aware of their abilities, strengths and weaknesses. They were also recognized the importance of metacognitive strategies.

5.12.2 Improvement

As a result of the analysis of the cover letters, there were five subcategories emerged under the heading of 'improvement' : improvement in grammar use, improvement in the use of punctuation, improvement in writing a coherent paragraph, improvement in vocabulary learning strategies and improvement in speaking. Among these subcategories, we were surprised to see punctuation. Some of the participants indicated their need to use the punctuations properly:

P4: ... I realized that the wrong use of punctuation can change the meaning of the sentence. So I began to be careful about it and I decided to learn more about the usages of the punctuations.

Cover Letter

P25: ... I am always forgetting to use commas in my paragraphs. I learned that I should use it carefully.

Cover Letter

P4 and P25 were mentioned their thoughts about the importance of the use of punctuations. P13's reflection goes to the improvement he has in grammar use:

P13: ... Up to now, grammar has not been important for me in writing a paragraph. I thought that stating my ideas is enough. However, I learned that just

writing down the ideas is not enough. I should use grammatically correct sentences while I am writing which makes my paragraph better. So I should give more importance to my grammar course which will affect my writing.

Cover Letter

He was aware of his weakness in having grammatically correct sentences and he decided to improve himself in his grammar course. Another participant focused on having a coherent paragraph:

P8: ... When I look at the first drafts of my first paragraph, the picture is incredible. I did not understand some of the sentences. Why did I write them? They are not related to the topic. However, I realized that day by day I improved myself in using relevant sentences in my paragraph in order to make it coherent.

Cover Letter

While she is thinking about her previous paragraphs, she is criticizing herself which is a sign of her taking charge of her own learning. She is aware of the necessity of using relevant sentences in a paragraph.

P29 talked about her improvement in using different strategies while she was learning new words:

P29: ... I realized that there is something missing in my usage of the new words. I have to learn more words. But I hate learning vocabulary. So I should find new ways.

Cover Letter

As seen from her excerpt, she is aware of her necessity to learn new words and she is trying to find new ways to make this learning process enjoyable.

Most of our participants stated another perspective that they were aware of. They focused on their improvement in their speaking skill as a result of the improvement in their vocabulary. P18 illustrated her thoughts in the following way:

P18: ... When I looked at my vocabulary log, I realized that I learned a lot of new words during this year. It is an advantage for me since I use them while I am speaking. I do not have to think about a word for a while. I am more eager to participate my speaking course.

Cover Letter

Another participant agreed with P18 by saying that:

P20: ... I do not have to sit at the back desks during my speaking course. Now I am more eager to participate since I trust myself. My vocabulary improved a lot during my writing course.

Cover Letter

5.12.3 Motivation

Motivation is a frequently mentioned category in almost all the reflection sheets of the participants. In our conferencing sessions in the first semester, the participants told us that they were not interested in writing a paragraph. They also indicated that they were in need of being motivated towards writing. So we decided to make them more interested in their writing course by changing their negative feelings towards writing into positive. As a result of the analysis of the reflection sheets and cover letters, we understood that we managed it.

P17: ... My thought about writing changed a lot during this year. When I think about myself at the beginning of the year, I was reluctant to enter the course. I was always sleepy during my writing course. However, by the help of the tasks and my teacher I began to enjoy writing. I think there was a problem with my teacher at my high school. Her lessons were very boring.

Cover Letter

P12: ... When I was a high school student, I hated writing. It was nonsense for me to write a paragraph. However, I have begun to like my course as a result of enjoyable tasks that my teacher gave us. And also I should not forget my writing portfolio. It is fun for me to prepare it.

Cover Letter

As P17 and P12 stated, the tasks used in a writing course, the teacher herself and the use of portfolio helped our participants to become more motivated.

5.12.4 Responsibility

Among the categories emerged as a result of the analysis of the cover letters, responsibility was important for us since it was one of the steps to become autonomous. When we looked at the results, we identified that it was mentioned in two subcategories: responsibility in choosing the topics of the paragraph and responsibility in vocabulary choice. We were familiar with these subcategories as the participants stated them in some of their reflection sheets. Here are some examples from their reflections:

P27: ... Deciding on the topic of my paragraph was a painful stage for me since it gave all the responsibility to me. I had to spend much time to think about the topics and much time to search for the topics. We were accustomed to being given the topics and asked to write about it. This is not the case at university.

Cover Letter

P1: ... I hated choosing the topics for my paragraphs. This was not the way I was familiar with until coming to the university. Before starting to write each paragraph, there were hours spent to decide on the topic. Sometimes I asked for help from my teacher but she just gave me some example paragraphs. She did not directly ask me to write about a specific topic. But I can easily say that it is a big responsibility for me which has a lot of advantages. I am the director of myself. I decide on every stage of my writing.

Cover Letter

P27 and P1 talked about their responsibilities in choosing the topics of their paragraph. However, P19 focused on her responsibility in choosing the words she would use in her paragraph:

P19: ... As a result of writing more paragraphs and discussing them both my friends and my teacher, I realized that I used the same words in my paragraphs. So I had to choose more new words for my paragraphs. Of course this is not the

case, to choose the words. I should decide on the words which can make my paragraph more interesting.

Cover Letter

5.12.5 Self-Confidence

The results of our conferencing with our participants in the first semester showed us that writing was not perceived as an interesting and enjoyable course. The participants found it boring. They did not trust themselves in this course. However, as a result of the analysis of the cover letters, we can easily say that they begin to feel more confident than in the past. Below are some examples from their cover letters:

P10: ... At the beginning of the year, I hated writing course. I did not want to attend this course since I was bad at writing a paragraph and reading it in the class. However, as the days passed, I realized that writing courses at university are not like the courses in my high school. Our teacher did not focus on the errors of my paragraph. So I began to trust myself and like my course.

Cover Letter

P2: ... I am eager to write a paragraph and share it with my friends. Thanks to my teacher and my friends! They all supported me to have better paragraphs.

Cover Letter

Depending on the perceptions of P10 and P2, we can say that our participants start to be more confident in their writing course.

5.12.6 Organization

Organization was a category we had as a result of the analysis of the cover letters with a subcategory called 'organization in planning the time'. Generally, our participants were aware of their problems in planning their time. When their teacher gave them definite dates to handle their tasks, they noted that it was useless to have more days to write. They said that they could give their task in the same they. However, as the days passed, they recognized that it was not the case. When we asked this to them in our conferencing sessions, they stated that in their high schools, they did not need to do any

preparations for writing a paragraph. They just wrote down the things they had in mind. Following are some of their excerpts:

P29: ... Trying to finish a task in a limited time was a big problem for me. It was not the way we followed in my high school. So I had difficulty in planning my time. I can say that the system at university is more useful for us. I learned to plan myself according to the deadline of the task.

Cover Letter

P5: ... Time limitation made me anxious at the beginning of the first semester since I did not use to write a task in a limited time. It was in a panic first. But when I finished my first and second tasks, I understood that it was advantageous for me. I learned to plan myself. As I planned my time, there was no need to be panic!

Cover Letter

5.13. Findings from the Qualitative Analysis of the Interview I and Interview II

As stated before (Section 3.4.2), we conducted an interview at the beginning and at the end of the implementation to find out the participants' thoughts about portfolio implementation and assessment. The first interview conducted at the beginning of the implementation was for identifying their thoughts about portfolio implementation and assessment. It was just after we gave a detailed explanation of the portfolio implementation and assessment. We tried to seek for an answer for our Research Question 3 (Section 1.4).

Second interview was conducted at the end of the study keeping in mind the research questions 3 (Section 1.4). We aimed to find out the changes, if any, that our participants underwent as a result of the portfolio implementation and assessment. Findings of the analysis of the Interview II were similar to the findings of the analysis of Interview I conducted just after the beginning of the portfolio implementation. There were seven categories with their subcategories emerged as a result of the analysis of the interviews. Following are the categories:

5.13.1 Definition of a Portfolio

Table 5.13.1 Definition of portfolio

	Interview I	Interview II
Definition of portfolio	General idea about portfolio	systematic
		planned
		enjoyable
		selective

At the beginning of the first semester, we spent a lot of time to explain the term portfolio. We tried to make it clear about why to use it, how to use it and what to put in it. During the first interview, we identified that our participants began to have a general idea about portfolio. When it came to define it in their own words, they had difficulty. Still, they stated that they had a definition of portfolio. Following excerpts were chosen to exemplify this category:

P9: ... It is a file in which students keep their homework during the period they study and put the papers related to writing and reading

Interview I

P3: ...It is a collection of work we have done in a specific area. For instance, we collect our writings such as essays, paragraphs and we form a file for them.

Interview I

P30: ... A file we put what we do in writing

Interview I

P15: ... It is a file which we put the things we do in our writing class

Interview I

P27: ... Portfolio is a kind of file which is arranged to present our writing papers by putting them an order.

Interview I

P9, P3, P30, P15 and P27 all described portfolio as a file in which they collect their paragraphs and essays. The following participant,(P23), gives her definition and points out a different aim for keeping a portfolio:

P23: ... Portfolio is a file in which we put our projects, writing papers, essays and paragraphs. We can put them altogether in a portfolio so that it can be easy for the teacher to evaluate.

Interview I

P13's definition is very clear in that she gives the steps of a portfolio in her own words. She perceives portfolio as getting to know oneself. This gives us the idea that our participants will be critical about themselves. Here is her definition:

P13: ...Portfolio is getting to know yourself. It is collection of what you have done, shows how you have developed since the beginning of the year. There are 3 steps in portfolio: a. collecting b.developing your writing c.writing a reflection

Interview I

P7 states that each portfolio belongs to its owner. It consists of the things the owner of the portfolio does:

P7: ... Portfolios are each student's story of who they are as writers, rich with the evidence of what they are able to do and how they are able to do it.

Interview I

To conclude as a result of the analysis of Interview I, we can say that only a few participants were aware of the benefits of the portfolio. The rest perceived it as a file. On the other hand, when we analyzed the results of Interview II we conducted at the end of the year, we realized that the participants' ideas about portfolio were changed. When we asked the participants to define portfolio in their own words, they preferred to give detailed explanations with portfolio's features. It is interesting to have features of portfolio which are being systematic, being planned, being enjoyable and being selective. Here are the excerpts:

P24: ... I like portfolio assessment. I like keeping a file. I like saving the paragraphs. It is very systematic. Everything is ready in this system. I know what to do in every stage.

Interview II

P6: ... There is something in portfolio which I cannot control. I find myself while doing something while I am preparing my portfolio.

Interview II

Both P24 and P6 are talking about a systematic procedure that the portfolio has. They cannot help doing the next stage to fulfill their portfolios.

P8, P15 and P27 were stating the portfolio's being planned. They said that portfolio is planned in its nature. So they do not have to plan themselves. To illustrate:

P8: ... I am in a way in which I cannot control myself. I find myself while I am doing something related to portfolio.

Interview II

P15: ... Everything goes on in a planned way.

Interview II

P27: ... No need to plan something for the preparation of my writing portfolio. In fact, I am not planning the things I am doing. But portfolio itself does this.

Interview II

P3, P23 and P11 are all stating that portfolio implementation is enjoyable.

P3: ... I do not get bored while I am preparing my portfolio. I feel good when I look at my portfolio as a whole. I do it. This makes me motivated and eager to continue.

Interview II

P23: ... I like writing lessons. I find it enjoyable. Maybe it is because of portfolio. Before this year, we did not have this system. So thanks to portfolio and the teacher! She introduced us with portfolio.

Interview II

P11: ... I enjoy my writing portfolio and my writing course.

Interview II

‘Being selective’ is an interesting and new term for us because we haven’t heard about it since the beginning of the year. It is incredible to see that our participants are careful while they are selecting the things they are going to put in their portfolios. This shows that they understand the idea behind the use of portfolio which says that portfolio does not mean to save everything in a file. Below are the examples:

P30: ... At the beginning of the year, I thought that I was going to save every thing related to writing course. However, as the days passed and as I understood what portfolio was in detail I realized that I should select the things to put in my portfolio carefully.

Interview II

P18: ... No need to save everything for my portfolio!

Interview II

P25: ... When I first heard that I was going to keep a file I thought that I was going to put everything in it. However, it was not the case. The things I am going to save change depending on my keeping portfolio.

Interview II

5.13.2 Advantages of a portfolio

Table:5.13.2 Advantages of a Portfolio

	Interview I	Interview II
Advantages of a portfolio	Awareness	Awareness
	Improvement	Improvement
	Motivation	Motivation
	Responsibility	Responsibility
	Confidence	Confidence

One of the questions of the interview was about their thoughts of the portfolio. During the interview, the participants mostly agreed with idea that using a portfolio in their writing class would be useful for them. Responsibility, awareness, improvement and motivation were the most frequently used terms for indicating the advantages of the portfolio as a result of the analysis of Interview I. When we analyzed the results of Interview II, we realized that the participants' ideas about the advantages of the portfolio have not changed. Here are some excerpts from the participants to illustrate these terms:

P13: ... keeping a file is not an easy job for me. Always there is something for me to do after my writing course. So I am a part of this class and I have to have a portfolio

Interview I

P14: ... It will give us a big responsibility. From now on I should collect everything in my file.

Interview I

P13 and P14 believe that they will be responsible for everything as a result of the portfolio implementation. P14 perceives responsibility as collecting every piece of the process in a file. Similarly, P13 is talking about his being a part of portfolio implementation which requires his being responsible. P23 is also aware of the fact that by the help of the use of portfolio in their course, she will have a chance to follow her improvement.

P23: ... I am going to be able to see my progress over time since I will have a chance to see everything I put in my portfolio.

Interview I

P4 and P8 stated that the portfolio would help them to be more motivated since they would be able to see all the things they would do during the year.

P4: ...Having everything with me gives me a positive feeling

S: What do you mean by positive meaning?

P4: I am more eager to participate my writing course.

S: Can we say it motivates you?

P4: Yes

Interview I

P8: ...It is like something which makes you relaxed and which gives you the feeling that you are not going to be bored in your writing class.

S: How?

P8: I have an aim to attend my writing course.

Interview I

P3, P11, P20 and P30 stated that the use of portfolio in their class would improve their grammar use in their paragraphs. To exemplify, the following excerpts were chosen:

P3: ... Since I am going to save my paragraphs in a folder, I should be careful about the use of grammatically correct sentences in my paragraph.

Interview I

P11: ... I should be careful about grammar

Interview I

P20: ... There mustn't be any grammar mistakes in my paragraphs.

S: Why?

P20: Because I am going to put them in my portfolio and I don't want to see any corrections on my papers.

Interview I

P30: ... I am going to be careful about not having more grammar mistakes.

S: Why?

P30: Because I am going to show it to my friends and I do not want them to think about me in a negative way.

S: What do you mean by negative way?

P30: If I have a lot of grammar mistakes on my paper, they are going to think that I am not a successful student.

Interview I

They do not want to have paragraphs full of grammar mistakes. The reason for this is generally not being offended when somebody sees it.

Following excerpts were chosen to illustrate the participants' thoughts about the advantages of portfolio as a result of Interview II. Here are the examples:

P25: ... I became aware of my abilities by the help of my writing portfolio. I feel myself as a writer sometimes.

Interview II

P13: ... I cannot believe my paragraphs sometimes. I have fewer grammatical errors in my paragraphs. I am good at using sentence connectors in writing a paragraph.

Interview II

P4: ... When my writing course finishes, when I go home, I have a lot of things to do. Writing a paragraph, evaluating it, then writing it again.... I have nearly has no spare time. I am always full.

Interview II

P10: ... I cannot believe that I am enjoying my writing course even writing a paragraph.

Interview II

The following excerpts were for the subcategory ‘confidence’ which became important for the participants.

P2: ... There is no problem in sharing my paragraph with other. I do not have the fear of being offended. I am ready to correct my mistakes if any.

Interview II

P16: ... I don't feel frustrated in my writing course. I trust my paragraphs

Interview II

Depending on the participants' thoughts we can say that they are aware of the benefits of the portfolio assessment for their writing course. They improved themselves which increased their motivation and confidence towards writing.

5.13.3 Disadvantages of a Portfolio

Table 5.13.3 Disadvantages of a Portfolio

	Interview I	Interview II
Disadvantages of a portfolio	Responsibility	Time Consuming
	Boring	
	Useless	
	Time Consuming	

During Interview I, the participants found portfolio implementation boring, useless and time consuming. They were complaining about the responsibilities that the portfolio required. It was also interesting for us to have responsibility as a disadvantage. But in the results of Interview II, we are happy to see the positive change in their thoughts about portfolio implementation and assessment in their writing class. The only point that they do not like is its being time consuming. However, they do not complain about it since they are aware of the benefits of portfolio implementation. To illustrate:

P17: ... Oh my God! Teacher, don't do it to us. I have to be busy with something always.

Interview I

We can say that this participant is afraid of having more responsibilities. Another participant finds portfolio implementation boring:

P9: ... Writing is boring so putting my paragraphs in a file will not be enjoyable.

S: Why do you think in this way? Maybe you are going to like it.

P9: I don't think so. I don't like writing. So it is impossible for me to enjoy portfolio.

Interview I

The next participant's reflection is interesting for us since he perceives portfolio implementation as useless. Here is his excerpt:

P29: ... What a nonsense thing it is! Keeping a file! For what?

Interview I

Depending on his reflection, we can say that there is something missing in the description of the aims of portfolio implementation in his class. So we decided to give more time to the explanation of the portfolio.

P24, P4 and P6 share the same opinion that portfolio implementation is just wasting time. Here are the excerpts:

P24: ... Teacher, it is a waste of time for me? Write a paragraph, check it, have a peer evaluation, then write it again, conference with the teacher...Of my God!

Interview I

P4: ...Time-consuming? Why am I going to spend my time?

Interview I

P6: ... It is a waste of time. No need to do it.

Interview I

The participants 8 and 30 also found portfolio time consuming, as in Interview I, but this time they were aware of its benefits for them. To exemplify:

P8: ... I have to spend much time to prepare my portfolio. But no problem! Because I know that I have something good in my portfolio.

Interview II

P30: ... When I look at the time I spend to prepare my portfolio I am sometimes asking WHY? Then of course I know the answer and I know that it is worth doing it.

Interview II

5.13.4 Self Evaluation

Table 5.13.4 Self Evaluation

	Interview I	Interview II
Self Evaluation	Being subjective	Being objective
	Being Critical	Being critical

When we conducted our first interview, being subjective and being critical were the subcategories for self-evaluation. During the interview we asked how they felt about assessing themselves. Almost all the participants stated that they were not used to assessing themselves so, they did not think that they were going to be objective in assessing their paragraphs. However, they were aware of the fact that it might be useful for them to be critical people.

When it came to analyze the results of Interview II, we were happy to have being objective and critical as subcategories. The first one, being objective, was a different category when we think about Interview I in which the participants thought that they could not be objective during self-assessment process. However, at the end of the year, after the implementation of portfolio, they stated that they learned to be objective.

Here are the examples:

P25: ... How will we evaluate our paragraphs? Teacher do you believe that we are going to be objective?

S: You are going to learn it

P25: I don't think so.

Interview I

This participant is a supporter of an idea that objectivity is a must in assessment. P17's thoughts were similar to P25's. She believes that she cannot be herself.

P17: ... I think I cannot be... that is...very objective. How will I give low mark to my paragraph?

Interview I

The following excerpts show that some of the participants are starting to become critical towards their paragraphs and they believe that it will be useful for their improvement:

P26: ... Good. We learn to be objective while we are criticizing our paragraphs.

Interview I

P15: ... I do not have a chance to ignore my errors. I should be objective. I should be critical. I don't know how but I am sure I am going to learn it.

Interview I

P1 and P19's comments they had during Interview II make it clear for us to see the change in their thoughts:

P1: ...It is something good of course. When we first started to evaluate ourselves, it was difficult for me to find the mistakes in my own paragraph. How could I give low mark? But now I learned to be objective in order to learn something from my paragraphs.

Interview II

P19: ...I learned to control myself while I was writing a paragraph. Because I hated to find errors in my paragraphs. It was very difficult for me to give low grades to my own paragraph. But if I did not have any errors, I didn't have to give low grades.

Interview II

P19 has a different point of view about self-assessment. He says that he learned to control himself which is something good and which is a sign of their being critical.

Almost all the participants stated that as a result of portfolio assessment and self-assessment they became aware of themselves and were able to produce better paragraphs.

5.13.5 Peer Evaluation

Table 5.13.5 Peer Evaluation

	Interview I	Interview II
Peer Evaluation	Being subjective	Being objective
	Being Objective	
	Having the fear of offending others	

This was another problematic area for the participants since they were not familiar with peer-evaluation. Being objective, being subjective and having a fear of offending others were the subcategories we had for peer-evaluation as a result of the analysis of the results of Interview I. The participants thought that they could not be objective in evaluating their friend's paragraph. However, in the analysis of the results of Interview II, we realized that our participants were relaxed while they were assessing the paragraphs of their friends. They did not have the fear of offending their friends and being subjective. As in self-assessment, they learned to be objective for the sake of learning from their own paragraphs. Following excerpts were chosen to exemplify it:

P14: ... My paragraph will be evaluated by my friend and I am going to evaluate my friend's paragraph. It is not easy to be objective.

Interview I

Another participant has a fear of offending her friends if she becomes objective:

P19: ... Is it easy to be objective in evaluating my friend's paragraph? ... I think I can be objective. If I want to learn something in this course, I should do it. But there is a question in my mind? I don't want to make my friends sad.

S: Do you mean to offend them?

P19: Yes.

Interview I

She states that she will have difficulty in being objective since she has a fear of offending her friends.

On the other hand, P12 and P26 share the same idea that by the help of peer-evaluation they can provide objectivity:

P12: ... Peer-evaluation is an evaluation consisting of two people, you and your partner. It is difficult for a person to be objective and to see his mistakes. But his partner can help him in realizing his mistakes. It can be very helpful for a person to be aware of his mistakes.

Interview I

P26: ... As for peer-evaluation, it is a person's evaluation about his/her friends. Peer-evaluation is also necessary since these evaluations come from another person, an objective side. As a result, this can provide people with seeing the events from a different angle.

Interview I

P1: ...I think peer-evaluation is more useful because we sometimes can't see our bad sides.

Interview I

Following excerpts were chosen as representatives of the change in their thoughts about peer-evaluation as a result of Interview II:

P30: ...Peer evaluation is necessary since we have difficulty in finding the errors in my paragraphs. My friends are more objective than me.

Interview II

Similarly;

P18: ... Now while I am writing my paragraph I feel an obligation to control myself. Because I know that there are my friends waiting for evaluating it. So I am trying to make fewer errors.

Interview II

P18's comment shows us that the participants begin to have auto-control as a result of peer-evaluation. P8 notes in her comment that she has no fear of offending her friends if she becomes objective:

P8: ... In the first semester, while I was evaluating my friend's paragraph, I sometimes did not tell all the mistakes. I can make her sad. But now all of us know that it is a part of our class and portfolio and we have to do it. No need to be sad.

Interview II

P20 has an interesting comment on peer evaluation:

P20: ...In the first semester, I could not tell the truth about my friends' paragraphs.

S: Why?

P20: ... You know teacher, I do not have good relationship with all my friends. So if I tell them their faults, mistakes, they can misunderstand me. They can think that I give them low marks because we are not good friends.

S: What about this semester?

P20: It has changed a lot. Now we all know that peer evaluation is necessary for portfolio and for our learning from each other. So why do we misunderstand each other?

Interview II

This shows us that the participants learn to assess each other's paragraph with having no fear in mind. They improve their judging skills.

5.13.6 Necessity to Conference

Table 5.13.6 Necessity to Conference

	Interview I	Interview II
Necessity to conference	Have a chance to discuss with the teacher	Have a chance to discuss with the teacher

Analysis of the Interview I related to this question revealed that all the participants agreed with the idea that conferencing would enable them to have a chance to discuss with their teachers. When we analyzed the results of Interview II, we did not have anything different. They still perceived it as 'having a chance to discuss with the teacher'. Following excerpts were chosen as examples:

P4: ... Of course, the teacher shows us our mistakes and informs us about process we must follow. It is very effective way for us to see our mistakes and to correct them with our teacher. We learn many things from the teacher during these hours.

Interview I

Some of the participants believe that teacher is the only resource they can learn something. Here are examples:

P23: ... It is really necessary. Teacher every time knows the best and while doing that, students could have the chance of correcting their faults.

Interview I

P14: ... Yes, it is necessary as without teacher's comment, we can not analyze our own writing.

Interview II

P25: ... Sometimes it helps the students finding their mistakes. By means of this, they write better essay or paragraph when they ask the teacher about their mistakes. Without teacher's help, it is difficult to learn something from our paragraphs.

Interview II

P17: ... Yes, as she/he is more experienced than us.

Interview II

From following excerpts, we can understand that conferencing is an advantage for the participants:

P19: ... Yes, I think it is useful to conference with the teacher between the drafts. It can make great contributions to our projects. It can be necessary in some cases when the project is really a hard one. But in some projects that are easy to do, you don't need to conference with teacher. You can do it yourself

Interview I

P2: ...From my point of view, conferencing with the teacher is the third level of evaluation (First is self-evaluation, and the second one is peer-evaluation) and is absolutely necessary. While the teacher evaluates our progress, he/she gives us feedback about whether we made mistakes or not. By the way the student asks questions and gets information and The teacher advices on his work. That means teachers orient us towards the best, which is an important part of education.

Interview II

5.13.7 Benefits of Reflection

Table 5.13.7 Benefits of Reflection

Benefits of Reflection	Interview I	Interview II
	Monitoring Themselves	Monitoring Themselves
	Being critical	Being critical
		Awareness

In the first semester, when we asked the participants to write a reflection after each task, they all complained about it since they were not familiar with this system. They did not like the idea to write reflection sheets after each task they would complete. However, they noted that it would be useful for their progress in writing. As a result of the analysis of Interview I, we had two subcategories: monitoring themselves and being critical. On the other hand, when we analyzed the results of Interview II, we were satisfied with the answers about reflection sheets since we identified that we reached our aim which was to have reflective participants. We came up with awareness as a new category emerged which showed that the participants began to question themselves and began to be aware of themselves.

Here are the examples:

P21: ... It is not a good idea to write a reflection on my paragraphs. How can I do it? It is not easy to find errors in my paragraphs and commenting on them.

Interview I

Depending on P21' comment we can say that he perceives writing reflection sheets as finding the errors in his paragraphs. This is a problem we encounter with during the first term so we try to give importance to explain it. P10 has something to say about reflection sheets since she has a fear of not criticizing herself? To exemplify:

P10: ... Teacher, it is not a good idea. How can I criticize myself?

Interview I

P25 and P8, on the other hand, are not pessimistic about writing reflection sheets. They believe that this will be challenging yet.

P25: ... It is like monitoring on my paragraphs and of course on me. It is difficult to do since I have a fear that I cannot be objective. But I am sure that I am going to learn a lot of things from them.

Interview I

P8: ... Reflecting on my paragraphs? It is not easy to criticize myself.. But it will make me critical. It will improve my thinking in a critical way.

Interview I

Following excerpts were chosen to illustrate the change they had in their thoughts in Interview II:

P21: ... I am always reading each sentence in my paragraphs with a question in my mind: Is it OK? If I do not like it I am changing it. It is good for me.

Interview II

P3: ... Day by day I realize that while I am writing the reflection sheets I am learning something. I become aware of the strengths and weaknesses in my paragraphs. So it is necessary for being aware of oneself.

Interview II

As P21 and 3 point out, awareness was one of the benefits of the reflection sheets. P17 is talking about monitoring himself while writing the reflection sheets:

P17: ... While I am writing the reflection sheets, I am thinking about the procedure from the beginning to the end. What did I do? Why did I do? Why did I use this word in this sentence... etc.

Interview II

P5: ... I always criticize myself. Is it good? I am not sure. I am always controlling myself while writing my paragraphs and when it comes to write reflection sheets, I cannot believe myself. I always criticize every sentence.

Interview II

P16: ... I feel myself as a teacher while I am writing my reflection sheets.

Interview II

Almost all the participants know that the use of portfolio in their course is beneficial for them. They generally talk about the feelings that they haven't had before.

5.14. Findings from the Analysis of Autonomy Questionnaire

In our second research question, we wanted to find out whether portfolio implementation and assessment contributed to the improvement of learner autonomy in terms of awareness of themselves, willingness to take responsibility for the process of learning, confidence in one's ability as a learner, being reflective, and being flexible. These items reflect the main characteristics of an autonomous learner (Section 1.1.1). In order to collect data for this research question, we used a learner autonomy questionnaire developed by Camilleri (1996) (Section 3.4.3). Through the questionnaires, we tried to find out if there was a change in the levels of the participants' autonomy and we wanted to identify if this change was statistically significant. From SPSS, U-Wilcoxon Rank Sum and Wilcoxon Matched Pairs Signed Rank Test were used for the analysis since we had related samples. The results are presented in Table 5-14. In this table, the means, medians, standard deviations of the results and the "p" values are included. The comparison of the autonomy questionnaire usage before and after the implementation is shown with the "p", significance value. In order to show the statistical changes, the significance value of each questionnaire was taken into consideration. If the statistical value is $\leq .0500$ probability level, they are accepted statistically significant. We have statistically significant changes in our questions except two which are about using a resource center and using audio visual materials in a class.

Table 5.14.1 Results of the Autonomy Questionnaire

No	Items	Pre			Post			P
		Mean	SD	Median	Mean	SD	Median	
1	Are you afraid of taking the initiative in your own learning, that is, of going further than what is composed?	1.7667	.67891	2,000	3.6000	.67466	3,5000	.000
2	How self-confident are you?	1.9000	1.12495	1,500	3.4333	.72793	3,000	.000
3	What level of interest and motivation do you have?	1.7333	.63968	2,000	3.4667	.81931	3,000	.000
4	How co-operative are you as a person?	2.0333	.71840	2,000	3.9000	.80301	4,000	.000
5	Do you like to participate in classroom events?	1.9000	.66176	2,000	4.0667	.58329	4,000	.000
6	How willing are you to discuss your own progress?	1.8667	.68145	2,000	3.4333	.72793	3,000	.000
7	How flexible are you when it comes to adapting yourself to new ways of learning?	2.0000	.78784	2,000	3.8333	.69893	4,000	.000
8	How flexible are you when it comes to adapting yourself to new environments?	1.7333	.63968	2,000	3.6333	.88992	4,000	.000

Table 5.14.1 (Devamı)

9	How flexible are you when it comes to adapting yourself to new friends?	2.1333	1.00801	2,000	3.7667	.72793	4,000	.000
10	Do you prefer to learn by listening passively to lectures?	2.1667	.64772	2,000	1.5333	.68145	1,000	.002
11	Do you prefer to learn by reading on your own?	1.8333	.69893	2,000	3.5667	.77385	4,000	.000
12	Do you prefer to learn by discussing with friends?	2.0333	.66868	2,000	3.6000	.85501	4,000	.000
13	Do you prefer to learn by working in a group?	1.9333	.78492	2,000	3.4000	.81368	3,000	.000
14	Do you prefer to learn by talking to the teacher?	1.9333	.73968	2,000	3.8333	.69893	4,000	.000
15	Do you use the school library?	2.4000	1.13259	2,000	4.2667	.58329	4,000	.000
16	Do you use a public library?	1.8667	.62881	2,000	2.7667	.77385	3,000	.000
17	Do you use a resource centre?	1.9000	.84486	2,000	1.9333	.69149	2,000	.753
18	Do you use newspapers, journals and magazines?	2.3333	1.12444	2,000	4.3333	.60648	4,000	.000
19	Do you use audio-visual material?	1.7000	.59596	2,000	1.8333	.64772	2,000	.334

When we look at Table 5.14 for the first question of the questionnaire, we can easily see the change in their thoughts about *initiating tasks*. The P value of .000 also shows this statistically significant change between the pre and post questionnaires. This is a sign of the participants' starting to initiate tasks which reveals their self-confidence. We came to the conclusion that this was due to their taking possession of their own learning. If it were otherwise, they would not start to initiate tasks without being told to.

The cover letter they wrote at the end of the year supported the change in their thoughts towards initiating a task. To illustrate following excerpts were chosen as representatives:

P 17: ... Yes, it is time for me to change my study habits. I should give more importance to my vocabulary. I should write more paragraphs on different topics. In this way I can improve both my vocabulary and my writing skills.

Cover Letter

P5: ... When I decided to write something I do not need my teacher's directing me. I decided on the topic and the style of the paragraph. Sometimes, while I was reading a newspaper, suddenly I came up with a word, for instance holiday, and I immediately started to think about the things I could write about this word.

Cover Letter

Depending on P17 and P 5's comments, we can say that they started to take their own initiations. P 17 has some decisions about her learning and P5 starts to write something by his own. These are the signs of their taking responsibilities for their own learning and their being no more in need of teacher initiation.

The second question was about *self-confidence* which was a term we often came up with during the analysis of reflection sheets, cover letters and interviews. The participants' level of self confidence increased at the end of the year ($p \leq .0500$). The participants' comments in their cover letters also supported this statistically significant change between the pre and post questionnaires. Here are the examples:

P1: ... No need to feel anxious! I have the ability to write on any topic.

Cover Letter

P24: ... It is incredible to see the change in my writing. I am sure that I am going to have no problem in my writing classes.

Cover Letter

They also stated the change in their self-confidence during the interviews as follows:

P20: ... I can write a paragraph with a lot of new words and with suitable sentence connectors. So I am always ready to share it with my teacher and with my friends.

Interview II

P5: ... I don't have a fear of being offended when I show my paragraph to my friends. I know that it is a part of my learning process. I

Interview II

Another important point in fostering learner autonomy in a class is *having learners with motivation and interest towards a course*. As seen from the table, there is a change in the thoughts of the participants as a result of the study ($p \leq .0500$). They also pointed out the importance of motivation and interest in their cover letters and interviews.

Some of the participants indicated in their cover letters that as a result of the portfolio implementation and assessment their motivation towards writing increased. Here are the examples:

P26: ... I am more eager to participate in my writing course. Thanks to portfolio!
Cover Letter

P1: ... I enjoy preparing something for my portfolio. I do not understand how the time passes. Sometimes I look forward to having new tasks.
Cover Letter

P30: ... Teacher I enjoy my writing course. I am happy when I look at my portfolio. Because my portfolio shows how much I have improved myself.
Interview II

Depending on P26, P1 and P30 we can say that they are all aware of the necessity of having motivation and interest towards a course.

The next question was about *co-operation*. In the first semester, the participants did not thoroughly support the idea of co-operation as they were not familiar with peer evaluation or conferencing which required co-operation with both their friends and their teacher. However, when we look at the second questionnaire's results, there is an increase and the P value, .000, also shows this significant change in their thoughts.

Co-operation was not mentioned before in the analysis of the reflection sheets, cover letters and the interviews directly. However, in their reflection sheets and cover letter, they indicated their being happy and satisfied during peer evaluation and conferencing. Below are P4 and P18' comments from their cover letters which shows that they have no complaints about being in co-operation with their friends and their teacher:

P4: ... It was very difficult to assess my paragraph with my friend. I am always thinking about a question: "How am I going to feel when my friend or friends show me the errors in my paragraph?" But after the second task, I did not have this problem. It is normal for me.

Cover Letter

P18: ... Conferencing with my teacher? How? I am going to my teacher's office and we are going to analyze my paragraph. I was not sure about my being and feeling comfortable. However, through the end of the first semester, I realized that it was not a problem. Rather, it became an enjoyable session for me. My teacher was not a teacher during that hour. We were two friends and we were doing peer evaluation. So I love my teacher, I like my writing course. I enjoy my writing course. When I am talking with my friends from other classes about my writing course, my teacher and my portfolio they stated that I am lucky. I agree with them. I am really lucky to be in this class. Thank you teacher.

Cover Letter

When it comes to talk about *participating in classroom events*, we can say that at the beginning of the year, before the portfolio implementation, the participants were not interested in it; however, at the end of the implementation, there was a big change in their thoughts which was statistically significant ($p \leq .0500$).

In their cover letters, they indicated that before the portfolio implementation, they did not enjoy their writing course and they got bored. They were not eager to participate. However, as a result of the portfolio implementation, they have begun to enjoy writing and they have wanted to be a part of their writing course. Here are the excerpts:

P6: ... I am not bored in my writing classes. I want to participate every session in the class.

Cover Letter

P15. ... I gave up counting the minutes in my writing. Now I do not understand how the lesson finishes. Before I did not want to participate and share my paragraph with my friends. But now my finger is always up.

Cover Letter

Depending on P6 and P15's comments, we can say that they are happy with the portfolio implementation.

Discussing their progress was the sixth question of the questionnaire which was another problematic area for us in the first semester since they were not familiar with it. However, at the end of the implementation we identified that there was a significant change in their thoughts and they were happy with discussing their progress ($p \leq .0500$).

At the beginning of the year, the participants did not like peer evaluation and conferencing sessions which required their sharing of their paragraphs and discussing their progress. In their cover letters, they noted that it was hard for them to do it as they had fear of being offended. However, they as a result of their keeping portfolio they learned to share their progress with no fear in mind. Here are the excerpts:

P2: ... “What a nonsense thing! I am going to share my paragraph with my friends and teacher and discuss about it! What are they going to think about me?” At the beginning of the year, these were the questions that I always asked myself. However, there is no question to be asked now. It is normal to share them.

Cover Letter

P10: ... It is not important for me what my friends are thinking about my paragraphs. Their comments are important for me to improve myself.

Cover Letter

The next point to be considered in the questionnaire was about *being flexible* (Q7, Q8, Q9). This was not easy for our participants since they were going to be a part of a new system called portfolio implementation. They were familiar with a system in which they were directed by a teacher and they were given everything ready to memorize. However, in the new system, in portfolio, they were not going to be given everything ready or there would not be strict rules to be obeyed in their writing course like “write a 250 word paragraph about yourself” or “use ...”. At the beginning of the year they did not like the idea of implementing portfolio in their writing course because of these reasons. In their cover letters, they explained their having no willingness for the new system as their being not familiar with this kind of implementation. However, in the second semester, at the end of the year, there is no problem with being flexible. They do not need to have fixed things to be learned. Instead, they can initiate their own learning

as stated in Question 1 above. The P value shows this significant change in their thoughts. Below are some comments of the participants from their cover letters:

P11: ... At the beginning of the year, when my teacher was trying to tell us a new system, called portfolio implementation, I felt angry. Because it was easy for us to be given the topics and to write our paragraphs and to give them to the teacher for assessment. But now it is our turn. It requires our working. I do not know how it would be. However, at the end of the year, I understood that there was no need to be worried about portfolio. If I enjoyed it, there was no problem.

Cover Letter

P20: ... It seemed difficult to learn this system at the beginning of the year. But it was not. I enjoyed it.

Cover Letter

P3: ... Adapting myself to a new thing is always a problem for me. I have fears about the new situations I am in. So I understand my feelings at the beginning of the year. I have difficulty in being flexible. But now, at the end of the year I have less fear.

Cover Letter

Depending on P11, P20 and P3's comments we can easily say that the participants improved themselves in being flexible in adapting to new environments new friends and new systems they encounter during their learning. They are more flexible than the first semester ($p \leq .0500$).

Listening passively to lectures was a point that the participants were familiar with. They were not eager to participate in the events in the classroom and share their paragraphs. However, at the end of the portfolio implementation, we can easily say that they are not in good terms with the idea of being passive during a course. Instead, they want to share their paragraphs and thoughts with their friends and teacher ($p \leq .0500$).

In their cover letters, they pointed out that there was a big change in their positions in their writing course. They did not want to be passive listeners. They wanted to share

their teacher's responsibilities since it was their work to learn not the teacher's. Here are the example comments:

P18: ... In my high school, I just sat down and listened to my teacher. If my teacher asked me a question, I answered. Otherwise, I did not participate in my courses. However, at university, in my writing course, as a result of portfolio, I have to be active.

Cover Letter

P27: ... I cannot manage to sit and listen only. It is the nature of portfolio. You have to be active, to participate your course and to share your ideas with your friends.

Cover Letter

P30: ... I cannot help being active!

Cover Letter

Reading on your own was among the participants' favorite activities at the beginning of the study since they were still after being passive. However, at the end of the implementation, we can easily recognize the change in their thoughts ($p \leq .0500$). In their cover letters, they explained its reason as they thought that they could learn only by studying alone, not by studying with their friends or with their teacher. Here are the excerpts:

P23: ... My teacher gives me my homework I go home. I do my homework. I work alone. That was the process I did before keeping portfolio in my writing course. I thought that I could only learn by writing or reading alone. It was impossible for me to learn as a result of the discussions with my friends or with my teacher.

Cover Letter

P28: ... I am bored now while I am reading or writing something on my own. It is more enjoyable to study with my friends in my writing course.

Cover Letter

The next point to be considered in the questionnaire was about *learning from other people* (Q11 and Q12). Before the portfolio implementation, the participants did not believe that they could learn something from their friends as they were familiar with their teacher's being the only source to teach something. However, as a result of the portfolio implementation, they have become the supporters of the idea that they can learn as a result of the discussions they have with their friends. Additionally, the p value shows this significant change in their thoughts ($p \leq .0500$).

In their cover letters, we have some comments about this change:

P2: ... We are going to be each other's teacher. It is nonsense. How can we know as much thing as our teacher? These were the things I was thinking about sharing my paragraphs with my friends. But now I see that yes we can teach something to our friends and we can learn something from our friends since we are learning to think and read critically

Cover Letter

P13: ... I did not get angry with discussing with my friends when I first heard about it. Why not? Maybe we are going to be useful to each other.

Cover Letter

To learn by talking to teacher was a topic in which we had significant changes. As in the questions about discussing with friends and working in a group, they first had difficulty in accepting the idea that they could learn from other people and their teacher was not the main learning source. In the first semester they all believed that there would not be a learning process without having the teacher in the center. As a result of portfolio implementation, they changed their minds and began to believe that they could learn from other sources. The P value in the above table is a sign for this change ($p \leq .0500$).

In their cover letter, we also have some comments related to this topic:

P16: ... We were taught that our teacher was the only person we could learn something. But at university we understood that it was not in this way. We can learn from other people as well as our teacher.

Cover Letter

P22: ... Teacher I am sorry that I have a lot of teachers in my class besides you. I am learning a lot of things from my friends.

Cover Letter

The next question was about *using a school library* which had not been very common among our participants until the portfolio implementation. In their cover letters, they explained its reason or reasons as their not being given homework which required using the school library.

When we look at the table we see that there is a statistically significant change in their thoughts ($p \leq .0500$). They believe that the use of portfolio in their course has a great affect on this change since it makes them to think about their learning resources. Here is an example comment:

P24: ... Until coming to university, I had not used school library. My teacher in my high school asked me to write a paragraph about a topic. No need to go to the school library. However, at university my teacher only gave me the task. I am responsible to decide on the problem, to decide on the style of the paragraph, to search about it and to learn the related vocabulary. So I have begun to use school library.

Cover Letter

Similarly the participants were not in good terms in *using a public library*. Some of them did not know that there was a public library in Adana or in their hometowns. In their cover letters, they pointed out that they did not need to go to the library in their school. So why would they use public library? Some of them stated that in order to use public library, they should have a complex and comprehensive homework which required them to go to public library. They said that they could only go there if they did not find the things in their school library.

However, when we look at the table above, there is a significant change in their thoughts ($p \leq .0500$). Following are some excerpts from their cover letters:

P7: ... Why should I go to public library? If my teacher gives me a project, I do it myself. Because I don't need to search for something. But If I need help I go to school library. From now on, I haven't had a very complex homework to use public library?

Cover Letter

P17: ... No need to go there! I can do my homework in my school library. It is enough.

Cover Letter

Depending on their comments, we can say that they start to believe in the usefulness of public library even though they do not use it.

For the next question, using a resource center, we have found results that are not statistically significant ($p \geq .0500$). This is a new term for the participants as resource centers are not very common in our country. For this reason in their comments in the questionnaire, they wrote that they didn't hear about it before and they did not know if there was in Adana.

They also added that they preferred to use the school and public library. Here are the examples:

P2: ... What is a resource center? I have not heard about it before. Why do we need to go there? Can't we use school library instead of it?

Questionnaire II

P14: ... I wish there was a resource center in Adana. I want to have big public laboratories or a space center in Adana. I do not remember the name of the city but there was a resource center in one of our big cities, maybe İzmir. It is a space center. You can have a trip in this center and walk like an astronaut. This is good. We can learn by living the situations.

Questionnaire II

For *using newspapers, journals and magazines in a course* was not a method that the participants were familiar with at the beginning of the year. However, when we look at Table 5.13 we see the statistically significant change in their thoughts ($p \leq .0500$). Again in their comments, they noted their happiness and satisfaction:

P23: ... I have become more critical while I am reading a magazine or a newspaper. I am always thinking about how I can use the things in my paragraphs.

Cover Letter

P6: ... I do not have difficulty in finding interesting topics for my paragraphs. While I am reading something, I note down the interesting things for me.

Cover Letter

When we look at the table for the last question we can say that we do not have a statistically significant change in the participants' thoughts with *the use of audio-visual material* ($p \geq .0500$). When we look at the comments they have in their questionnaires, we realize a fact that they have not used audio visual aids in their courses. So they do not believe that they can also learn from them. It is interesting for us since we used computers and overhead projection in our course. We were expecting a significant change in their thoughts. But there is no statistically significant change. Here are their comments:

P7: ... It is useless to see my or my friends' paragraphs on a slide. It is not necessary to spend much time. We can learn without it.

Questionnaire II

P18: ... No need!

Questionnaire II

The following comment is interesting as it is about the usefulness of using the audio visual materials in a writing class:

P29: ... our teacher shows some model paragraphs on a slide. I am not bored while I am listening to my teacher. We all have a chance to make contributions to the lesson as we see the material on a slide on board. We sometimes write our paragraphs on a slide and talk about it on the class. In this way everybody has a chance to see it, not only me and my friend.

Questionnaire II

To conclude in general, awareness, taking responsibility, self-confidence, reflection and being flexible are the items reflecting the main characteristics of an autonomous learner (Section 1.1.1). Awareness is the first criterion to be an autonomous learner. The participants began to be aware of both their weak and strong points and what they needed to improve themselves. For taking responsibility, we analyzed Questions 1, 4, 5, 15, 16, 17, 18, and 19. The findings reveal that the participants of this study are ready to take responsibility for their own learning. The results of the questionnaire also reveal that our participants became more self-confident as a result of portfolio implementation (Q2). Their comments in their reflection sheets also support this idea (Table 5.11). When we look at this table we understand that the participants began to be self-confident through the end of the study. We have statistically significant results for reflection when we look at Question 6 in the questionnaire. It means the participants become more reflective at the end of portfolio implementation. When we analyze Questions 7, 8, 9 from the questionnaire for the last category, being flexible, we have statistically significant findings which show us that our participants have become flexible enough to adapt themselves to new things they encounter.

5.15. Findings from the Analysis of the Learners' Grades

One of the aims of this study is to find out whether learners' achievement in writing skills is improved by the implementation of writing portfolio. In order to see if writing portfolio leads to this improvement, we analyzed the participants' grades they took from the tasks they prepared for their writing portfolios. The quantitative data was analyzed through Friedman test to find out if there was a statistically significant difference between the grades. The results of this test are presented in Table 5.15.1. In order to show the statistical changes, the significance value of each task was taken into

This result shows that portfolio implementation helped learners improve their achievements in writing. This increase did not happen at one shot. It is possible to observe a steady increase in participants' achievements from the first to the last task. They pointed out this improvement in their reflection sheets, cover letters and interviews.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.0 Introduction

The aim of this study to find out whether learners' achievement in writing skills is improved by the implementation of writing portfolio and to find out whether or not portfolio implementation would lead to learner autonomy (Section 1.3). In this chapter, we give a brief explanation about how much we have achieved these aims by commenting on the findings of the study. We also discuss the findings in relation to the research questions.

6.1 Summary of the Findings

For the present study we have tested three research questions related to the portfolio implementation and assessment and learner autonomy:

1. Does the implementation of writing portfolio lead to the improvement of the learners' achievement in writing skill?
2. How does the implementation of writing portfolio enhance autonomy of the learners in terms of
 - a) awareness of themselves
 - b) willingness to take responsibility for the process of learning
 - c) confidence in one's ability as a learner
 - d) being reflective
 - e) being flexible
- 3) Is there any change in learners' thoughts about the use of portfolio in their writing classes?

As stated before (Section 3.4) we had different tools to collect our data to test these research questions. The analysis of these data will be given in the following sections.

6.1.1 Improvement of the Learners' Achievements in Writing Skill

In our first research question, we tried to seek whether portfolio implementation affects improvement of the learners' achievement in their writing course. In order to see if there was a change or not in their improvement, we took into consideration their grades they took from their tasks they had prepared for their writing portfolios (Section 3.6), cover letters (Section 3.4.1.1), reflection sheets (Section 3.4.1.2), and interviews (Section 3.4.2).

Depending on our study, we can say that portfolio implementation might have a positive impact on the participants' writing achievements in their portfolio tasks. Şahinkarakaş (1998) also found the same results indicating that portfolio implementation had a positive impact on the participants writing achievement. She added that the participants learned from their own paragraphs and from their mistakes.

In our present study, the grades the participants took during this year show that there is a step by step improvement in their achievements. When we look at Table 5.14.1 in Chapter 5, we can observe this steady improvement. Besides, they are aware of the improvement they had throughout this year and they state that it is because of the use of writing portfolio in their course. This awareness which can be observed in participants' reflection sheets and cover letters started with the second task (Table 5.11). At first they only perceived improvement in writing a coherent paragraph and in grammar use. When they finished their fifth tasks, they realized that they should learn more new words to write an attractive and an effective paragraph. It means they started to use the gains they had in their writing course in other skills. They were aware of their need to improve different aspects of their writing like writing a coherent paragraph or using different strategies to learn new words. These are satisfying results for us since the participants are criticizing themselves which is a sign of their taking charge of their own learning.

We have similar results in the analysis of Interview I and II. The participants are aware of the benefits of portfolio implementation for their improvement in their writing course. P13, for instance, realized the advantages of portfolio for her improvement:

P14: ... I have fewer grammatical errors in my paragraphs. There are not any irrelevant sentences in my paragraph. I give importance to using sentence connectors.

Interview II

This awareness was probably due to essence of the process of portfolio implementation. During our study, our participants had a chance to receive both written and oral feedback from their teacher and their friends in-between their drafts. This helped them to work on their weak points which could be about grammar, organization, and so on. Hence, they benefited from portfolio assessment system in which they had this opportunity to study and correct their errors and improve their writing abilities.

Aside from getting written or oral feedback, they got together with their teacher for the conferencing sessions which made them become aware of their weak or strength points in their paragraphs. They also realized that their teacher was not only there to show their errors. Instead, they were like friends who were assessing a paragraph.

To conclude, we found out that the participants of this study started to write more organized paragraphs with a variety of vocabulary. They were good at producing more relevant sentences in their paragraphs. Consequently, they became more successful in their writing course.

6.1.2 Fostering Learner Autonomy

In our second research question, we wanted to find out whether portfolio implementation and assessment fostered learner autonomy in the classroom in terms of awareness of themselves, willingness to take responsibility for the process of learning, confidence in one's ability as a learner, being reflective, and being flexible. We had these items since they are the main characteristics of an autonomous learner (Section 1.1.1). In order to collect data for this research question, we used a learner autonomy questionnaire developed by Camilleri (1996) (Section 3.4.3). Through the questionnaire, we tried to find out if there was a change in the levels of the participants' autonomy. Cover letters, reflection sheets and interviews were used to support these findings.

Awareness is the first criterion to be an autonomous learner. We have awareness throughout the study (Table 6.1.1). However, the content of the term has changed a lot during the study. At the beginning of the year the participants were aware of only their weak points. However, towards the end of the study the things they were aware of were changed. They began to be aware of both their weak and strong points and what they needed to improve themselves. The results of the reflection sheets, cover letters and interviews support these findings. All the participants stated their being aware of their strengths and weaknesses in their writing skills. When we look at the results of all data in general, we can say that the participants are aware of themselves as learners and they are ready to take the responsibility for the process of learning. Having awareness in all our findings is a satisfying result for us since awareness is our corner stone for this study.

Taking responsibility is the next feature to be an autonomous learner. The finding of the present study has similarities with the findings of Yıldırım (2005) since both of the studies reveal that the participants are ready to take responsibility for their own learning. The results of the reflection sheets, cover letters and interviews also support their being willing to take responsibility for the process of learning. They have started to become aware of their responsibilities as learners for their own learning which make us think positively that our participants are on the way of becoming autonomous and critical. Table 5.11 also shows that the participants began to be aware of their responsibilities as learners after they had completed their fifth tasks.

Self confidence is another feature that an autonomous learner should have for us. The results of the questionnaire reveal that our participants became more self-confident as a result of portfolio implementation. Their comments in their reflection sheets also support this idea (Table 5.11). The participants began to be self confident through the end of the study. At the beginning of the study, our participants were reluctant to participate in the activities we did in our writing classes. They were not willing to share their paragraphs with their teacher and their friends. They did not believe in themselves and their paragraphs. They always had a fear of being offended when they shared their products with their friends. However, at the end of the year, they were eager to have both peer and teacher edition for their paragraphs. They began to have no fear of being offended in front of the class. They realized that they could also learn from their

paragraphs. They became less frustrated. To conclude we can say that the participants started to feel confident as a result of nearly two semesters. It is a normal process for us since such an improvement in their gaining self confidence would normally take time.

Reflection is an important step in leading autonomy in a class. We have statistically significant results. The participants become more reflective at the end of portfolio implementation. This is also what we find as a result of the analysis of their reflection sheets, cover letters and interviews. The participants indicate that they had difficulty in writing reflections on what they wrote at the beginning of the study. However, through the end of the study, they have started to talk about the benefits of reflection for them. They started to be more reflective and critical in their writings which affected their thinking. This shows us that our participants have begun to be more critical about their products. They do not any more perceive reflection as only finding the errors in their paragraphs. They understand the effects of portfolio on their being more reflective in the process of their learning. This is an important step for us to foster autonomy in our class. A reflective learner is always critical about his/her own learning.

Being flexible is last feature we expect to observe in an autonomous learner. Flexibility in this study means to adapt oneself to new ways of learning, to new environments and to new people. We have statistically significant findings which show us that our participants have become flexible enough to adapt themselves to new things they encounter. The results of the cover letters and interviews also support these findings.

6.1.3 Change in the Learners' Thoughts about Portfolio Implementation and Assessment

Our interviews had seven categories: definition of the portfolio, advantages of portfolio, disadvantages of portfolio, self-evaluation, peer evaluation, necessity to conference and reflection.

Analysis of these data shows that the participants have changed their thoughts on five of these categories. At the end the implementation, their definitions of portfolio became more concrete. They could give the features of portfolio implementation such as systematic, planned, enjoyable and selective. Our participants' attitude towards

portfolio became more positive as the way they saw the disadvantages the system changed: they thought it was being boring, useless and time consuming at the beginning, but at the end they found it only time consuming.

As for self- and peer-evaluation categories, it was clear that they started to be more objective. Their fear of offending others while evaluating their friends even disappeared at the end. In the reflection category, we could see that the participants were more aware of themselves due to the contribution of reflections they did.

The two categories that did not change were advantages of portfolio and necessity to conference. From the very beginning of the study, the participants revealed the advantages of portfolio as awareness, improvement, motivation, responsibility and confidence. This was probably due to our explanations about the uses of this system before we started. The participants also accepted the conference as a chance to discuss with the teacher at the beginning and this remained the same.

The participants generally talked about a change they underwent. They focused on the changes in their awareness towards themselves. They all stated that they began to be aware of their feelings, thoughts, strengths, weaknesses and abilities that they had not recognized before. They added that by the help of portfolio implementation they became more conscious towards their learning which was important in achieving learner autonomy. The participants were also aware of their improvement in their writing skill. Awareness was our key word to foster learner autonomy. Everything was related to awareness: improvement, motivation, responsibility, self-confidence, reflection and organization. The participants could only manage them if they were aware of themselves, their abilities, their thoughts and so on.

To conclude in general, we can say that portfolio implementation has a positive impact on the participants' thoughts about their writing course. As Bayram (2006) indicated portfolio implementation has a positive influence on what the participants think about their writing course. At the beginning of the year, our participants had negative perceptions towards writing. At the end of the study, we are happy to have this positive change in their thoughts.

6.2 Scope for Future Research

This study is conducted in only the preparatory class students' writing course. For further research, implementation of portfolio assessment system can be expanded to other courses they have in preparatory class to see if their keeping portfolio in their writing course affects the other courses.

Another research topic might be the continuation of portfolio in the freshman to see the changes the participants have in their achievements and autonomy. We conducted this study with only preparatory class students. Some students may be followed to see if they have any change in their achievements and autonomy.

For this study we chose only one group and implemented portfolio to this group. We had no chance to compare our results with another group. For another study, two groups may be chosen to compare the results of control group with the other group.

6.3 Personal Reflections

Conducting this research contributed to my gaining of a whole different perspective on my personal and professional lives. Throughout this study, I acquired the ability to look at issues critically. I realize that I benefited from portfolio implementation as a teacher which made me a critical and reflective person. It was really a difficult journey for me to finish this study. However, the things I gained made it enjoyable and worthwhile.

As a researcher, I learned by doing with my participants. This made me aware of my weaknesses and strengths. Besides, I started to be an autonomous person as I became more reflective, critical, more responsible and more self-confident.

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APPENDIX 1

CONSENT FORM

I hereby declare that I have been enlightened about the study to be conducted by the researcher Selma DURAK ÜĞÜTEN. By signing this consent form I agree to participate in all the activities regarding this study.

Name:

Signature:

APPENDIX 2

Questions for Interview I and II

1. What is portfolio in your own words?
2. What are the advantages of portfolio use in a course?
3. What are the disadvantages of portfolio use in a course?
4. What is self-evaluation? What do you think about it?
5. What is peer-evaluation? What do you think about it?
6. Do you think it is necessary to conference with the teacher between the drafts?
7. What do you think about writing reflection sheets? Are reflections sheets useful for your achievement in your writing class?

APPENDIX 3

A questionnaire to help you establish your personal level of autonomy (see Camilleri 1996).

Answer the questions given below. Do not write your name. Choose from (1) the lowest score to (5) the highest score.

Are you afraid of taking the initiative in your own learning, that is, of going further than what is imposed?	1 2 3 4 5
How self-confident are you, especially in your academic work?	1 2 3 4 5
What level of interest and motivation do you have?	1 2 3 4 5
How co-operative are you as a person?	1 2 3 4 5
Do you like to participate in classroom events?	1 2 3 4 5
How willing are you to discuss your own progress?	1 2 3 4 5
How flexible are you when it comes to adapting yourself to:	
- new ways of learning	1 2 3 4 5
- new environments	1 2 3 4 5
- new colleagues	1 2 3 4 5
Under which conditions do you feel more confident to do the above?	
Have you ever had to establish your own learning goals?	
Were you ever able to list your learning needs?	
How do you prefer to learn?	
- By listening passively to lectures	1 2 3 4 5
- By reading on your own	1 2 3 4 5
- By discussing with colleagues	1 2 3 4 5
- By working in a group	
- By talking to the teacher	
How often do you use the following resources?	
- The school library	1 2 3 4 5
- A public library	1 2 3 4 5
- A resource centre	1 2 3 4 5
- Newspapers, journals, magazines	1 2 3 4 5
- Audio-visual material	1 2 3 4 5
Kindly comment about your answers to the previous two questions.	1 2 3 4 5
Do you think you are able to be objective in your own evaluation?	
Have you ever carried out self-evaluation?	
What did you learn from it?	

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DERS NOTLARI, SUNUMLAR VE TEKNİK RAPORLAR

1. Constructivism
2. ELT Methods and Approaches
3. Reflective Thinking
4. Reflective Teaching
5. Learner Autonomy
6. Teacher Autonomy
7. Assessment