

To my beloved daughter,
Cemre Doğa UÇAR

English Language and Literature Students' Perceptions of Reflective Writing, its
Effects on Engagement in Writing and Literature

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ABSTRACT

ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF
REFLECTIVE WRITING, ITS EFFECTS ON ENGAGEMENT IN WRITING AND
LITERATURE

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This study investigated the effects of the reflective writing process on English Language and Literature students' engagement with writing and literature and their demonstrated engagement level in the reflective writing process. This study was conducted over a period of nine weeks with six students from the English Language and Literature Department in Cumhuriyet University in Sivas. Students read excerpts from literary works of different genres and following discussion sessions on these works, wrote reflective responses. Their responses were analyzed using a reflective writing evaluation framework, developed by the researcher from the related literature to investigate the effects of reflectivity on students' engagement with writing and literature. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant in order to gain an in-depth understanding of their perceptions of the reflective writing process. The findings found that the reflective writing process significantly increased the students' engagement levels with writing and literature, and that they gained a positive

attitude towards reflective writing. The results of the study may help primarily instructors of writing courses and lecturers in literature departments in contributing to students' engagement with writing and literature by making use of reflective writing in the form of a voluntary extra-curricular activity.

Key Word: Reflectivity, Writing, Literature, Engagement

ÖZET

İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN YANSITICI YAZMAYA
DAİR ALGILARI VE YAZMA VE EDEBİYATA İLGİLERİ ÜZERİNE ETKİSİ

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Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi Bölümü

Danışman: Yrd. Doç. Dr. Julie Mathews Aydınlı

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Bu çalışma yansıtıcı yazma sürecinin İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı öğrencilerinin yazmaya ve edebiyata olan ilgileri üzerindeki etkilerini ve öğrencilerin yansıtıcı yazmaya karşı ilgi seviyelerini incelemiştir. Çalışma, Sivas Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatından altı öğrenciyle dokuz haftalık bir süreçte gerçekleştirilmiştir. Öğrenciler farklı edebi türlerden çeşitli alıntılar okumuşlardır, bu çalışmalar üzerine yapılan tartışma oturumlarının takibinde tartışmalarda ortaya çıkan önemli konular hakkında yansıtıcı yazılar hazırlamışlardır. Öğrencilerin yazıları, yansıtıcı yazının öğrencilerin yazma ve edebiyata olan ilgileri üzerindeki etkilerini araştırmak için ilgili literatürden araştırmacı tarafından derlenen yansıtıcı yazma değerlendirme ölçeği kullanılarak analiz edilmiştir. Öğrencilerin yansıtıcı yazmaya algıları hakkında derin bir anlayış kazanabilmek için, her bir öğrenciyle açık uçlu görüşmeler yapılmıştır.

Çalışmanın bulguları söz konusu olduğunda, yansıtıcı yazmanın İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı öğrencilerinin yazmaya öğrencilerin yazma ve edebiyata dair ilgilerini büyük oranda artırdığı ve yansıtıcı yazmaya karşı olumlu bir tutum geliştirdikleri bulunmuştur.

Çalışmanın sonuçları, yansıtıcı yazmayı müfredat dışı etkinlikler halinde kullanarak faydalanmak yoluyla öğrencilerin yazma ve edebiyata olan ilgilerine katkıda bulunarak öncelikli olarak yazma derslerine ve edebiyat bölümlerine giren öğretmenlere yardımcı olabilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yansıtıcı, Yazma, Edebiyat, İlgi

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Most of a student's time at university is invested in reading, thinking, and discussing with others what has been read. This process is followed by rethinking about what we were thinking, and considering how these prior thoughts have been transformed into new ones. Reflective writing is a personal and sophisticated process, which might be considered as a documented form of thoughts fostering the thinking process, exploration, and comprehension in return. Therefore, reflective writing might arguably be employed as one of the most significant learning tools in tertiary education, reaching far beyond what we often achieve in the classroom. However, much of what is expected from student writers, and what is acceptable in many university courses, does not go beyond only conveying information or being a mere description or summary of the course and course materials, which involves little or no reflective thinking and into which student writers cannot integrate or become involved. University education, which should provide ideal conditions for critical and expressive thinking, and thus, a recognition of what student writers have learned, and combining prior knowledge with new challenges, is hardly utilizing reflectivity.

Before student writers can effectively evaluate and explore the literary works and ideas of others, they should assess and explore their own words and ideas, by which means they might take part in the teaching/learning process as individuals, thus, resulting in more involved and engaged writings rather than standard university essays.

This study will explore a group of English Language and Literature students' perceptions of the practice of reflective writing, and its effects on their overall

engagement in literature and writing by means of applying a framework compiled by the researcher from the relevant literature.

Background of the Study

Most writing programs in Turkish universities adopt a product-oriented approach, which emphasizes the mechanical aspects of writing, such as grammatical and syntactical structures and imitating writing models focusing on the correctness of the final product (Porto, 2001). This method presents the writers with organizational frameworks and demands that they express their ideas within these frameworks (Nunan, 1991). Thus, learners may be more likely to take a pragmatic stand toward writing, in which they might ignore the literary and communicative value of their writings and focus primarily on reproducing a text parallel with the model texts. Students are generally required to complete essays whose agenda consists of rewriting the plots of novels, plays, and short stories, or of summarizing course materials. This approach often results in little more than paraphrases of the original works, instead of writing texts that may allow learners to express their individuality and enhance their comprehension of the ideas in those works. Moreover, it has been argued that the widespread use of a product-oriented approach has a detrimental effect on an individual's expressivity (Elbow, 2002), diminishing student creativity and individuality and resulting in a decrease in authentic narrative voice and decision making.

In recent decades, the practice of writing in a second or a foreign language seems to have gone through a transition in connection with recent research on language learning and second language learning. Language learning research has led to pedagogical shifts from teacher-centered approaches, such as grammar translation and

audio lingual methodology, to learner-centered approaches, place value on the individual as a whole (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). From 1965 onwards, language learning has ceased to be viewed as linguistic competence emphasizing grammatical structures, and has started to be viewed as communicative competence emphasizing learner strategies (Nunan, 1990). Language learning has turned into an act which is political and potentially transformative, even emancipatory, and which is not merely confined to learning academic subject matter (Auerbach, 1992).

Following this transformation in beliefs about language learning, writing in a second language has started to be viewed as a free and a process-oriented act. While a product-oriented approach focuses on the final product, a process-oriented approach focuses on the process of writing itself. Designing writing activities based on process-oriented writing has been shown to produce positive results in improving both L1 and L2 writing. It is argued that writers gain some possible benefits from this approach, including an increase in their motivation and engagement in the writing process, and greater opportunities for self-discovery and self-expression. In a product-oriented approach, on the other hand, it is difficult for writers to become involved intellectually and emotionally in the final product (Raimes, 2000). This difficulty in being involved might be a result of the passive role of writers in determining the subject matter of writing activities and the pre-determined nature of the tasks by the instructor or the course book itself. Ponim (1993) compared product-oriented writing with process-oriented writing and found that students achieved significantly higher writing proficiency through process-oriented writing. Another study comparing the writing ability of students found that learning through a process-oriented approach yielded far

more effective and productive writers than learning through a product-oriented approach (Thammasarnsophon, 1991).

However, some criticisms of process-oriented writing have also been made, suggesting that this approach is imitative, as learners follow the principles of good writers, read and evaluate each other's writing and revise them (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009). Additionally, process oriented writing requires more time if it is to be applied adequately, is difficult to monitor in large groups, and may cause problems for evaluation. Because of the long time required, this type of writing is not generally seen applicable where strict time limits give shape to both the academic terms and examinations (Hedge, 2000). Because of these concerns, there are some difficulties in the use of process writing in language teaching.

To overcome these problems in process writing, the Expressive School in writing (Elbow, 2002; Faigley, 1986) suggests that reflective writing should be encouraged to provide opportunities for learners to explore the *self* through writing. Merriam and Caffarella (1999) present a very clear definition of reflective writing: "The mental construction of experience, inner meaning, and critical self-reflection are common components of this approach" (p. 2). Schön (1987) suggests that reflective writing is a significant step in gaining expertise in any discipline. Within this approach, writing becomes a tool for thinking and discovery, through which learners transform *their* ideas on paper without any interruption (Elbow, 1973). However, such mental and cognitive achievements may not be reached where there is an educational focus on learners' vocational needs, and in contexts dominated by examinations (Sivasubramaniam, 2004). These mental and cognitive achievements can only be reached through reflective writing activities designed to encourage "individuals engage

to explore their experiences in order to lead to new understandings and appreciations” (Boud, 1985 p. 19). By using observation forms, self reports, and portfolios, writing can provide a space that includes our thinking about events, and contributes to our reflection about these events.

Accumulating research in teaching shows that reflective writing has become an important tool (Clandinin & Kennard, 1993; Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991) which facilitates the viewing of *the self* by exploring and evaluating the present situation, and constructing new insights for future situations. The majority of studies on the use of reflective writing have been carried out with in-service teachers and with pre-service teachers as a way of getting teachers to think about their methods and techniques (Richards, 1998; Tsang, 1996; Woodfield, 1998). According to these studies, reflective writing is a significantly valuable tool to “make sense of educational theories while personalizing them, applying them, and determining their relevance to educational philosophies and practices” (Good & Whang, 2002 p. 256). Additionally, Lee (2007) recommends that student teachers not only utilize reflective writing as a tool for in-depth understanding of teaching applications, but also use it as a means to evaluate and reevaluate themselves at different points of time, through their responses.

Even though the number of the research studies about reflective writing focusing on English Literature students is limited compared with those conducted in teacher education programs, there are a few (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Sivasubramaniam, 2004). These studies evaluate the effect of reflective writing on students’ mastery of a second language. Through the application of these studies, literature students were included in a non-credit writing program within which they produced reflective writings in response to open-ended questions about literary works

of different genres. The studies concluded that the reading and writing courses of literature departments of universities should be viewed as a way to communicate the insights of the writers and receive responses from other readers/writers, which will help them develop into good writers (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009). From this perspective, student writers might have the opportunity to explore their inner *self* through writing reflective responses. Thus, reading and writing courses can function as a tool in the personal enrichment of student writers.

The studies above suggested that through reflective writing, the responses of student writers became intellectually richer and more mature. Their sentences showed a sense of involvement and engagement with the writing process. However, in order to confirm those results, more research is needed. Evaluating the effect of reflective writing on the students' comprehension of literary works might add another dimension to the research literature. Thus, conducting a study investigating English Language and Literature students' perceptions of the practice of reflective writing, and its effects on their engagement in literature and writing might contribute to the literature. Additionally, this study might shed new light on the question of whether students' engagement in the literature and response writing can be evaluated through reflective responses.

Statement of the Problem

Research on reflective writing has differed both in its broad focus and with respect to specific relationships explored. In terms of focus, there are studies looking at reflective writing's use in teacher training (Daloglu, 2001; Degago, 2007; Graves, 1994; Hume, 2009; Richards, 1998; Tsang, 1996; Watson, 2010; Woodfield, 1998), in the teaching of language (Buehl, 1996; Clandinin & Kennard, 1993; Kalman, 2008;

Knowles & Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Lai & Calandra, 2009), and in the teaching of literature (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Lee, 2007) Within the teaching of language, the relationship between reflective writing and various aspects of language have been explored, including the effect of reflective writing on exploration and the use of different writing strategies (Van Rensburg, 2004), reflective writing and developing meta-cognitive awareness and, ultimately, enhancing learning (Mair, 2011), and reflective writing and learners achieving awareness of their learning (Buehl, 1996). In teacher training, research has focused on the relationship between reflective writing and development of professional knowledge (Vanhulle, 2005), reflective writing and teachers gaining awareness of their own levels in language and teaching (Grainger, 2005) and the development of teachers in thought processes (Hoover, 1994). Some research has evaluated the effect of reflective writing on the reading and writing development of literature students (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Sivasubramaniam, 2004), and one study (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009) indirectly mentions an increase in participants' engagement in the subject matter of the course, even though the writers do not have a clear framework for evaluating and communicating their findings. However, no studies have directly focused on the impact of reflective writing on the engagement levels of learners in literature and writing.

Like other learners in the fields mentioned above, many Turkish learners of English as a second language, English Language and Literature learners in the context of the present study, find themselves in countless situations in which they are expected to produce written responses. In nearly all courses in English Language and Literature department, learners respond through written responses either as part of the course

schedule or in the form of examinations. Many students in literature departments regard these forms of writing activities as distressing experiences because of the limited nature of written responses. They state that written responses should be seen as chances to express their personal reflections on the subject matter; instead, what is demanded is the reproduction of the model responses or summaries of target texts. However, Porto (2001) states that writing activities should be provided as an environment for the creation or exploration of new ideas and concepts. Thus, it is necessary to acknowledge in what ways writing activities can be used in full potential to engage and motivate learners to write. The proponents of The Reflective School, Elbow (2002) and Faigley (1986) suggests that reflective writing might be encouraged to provide an environment in which learners might be real owners of their responses; thus the learners might feel more engaged and motivated in writing and literature. The present study attempts, therefore, to explore students' perceptions of reflective writing and its effect on their engagement levels.

Research Questions

This study attempts to address the following research questions:

1. What are the participating English Language and Literature students' perceptions of the practice of reflective writing?
2. What is their demonstrated engagement level in the reflective writing process?

Significance of the Study

This nine-week exploration into the reflective writing process with six first year students of an English Language and Literature Department in Cumhuriyet University in Sivas, Turkey aims to contribute to the very limited literature

considering the effect of reflective writing on the overall engagement levels of learners in literature and writing. With the help of the study, the effects of reflective writing on the overall engagement of the learners and their perspectives on these kinds of writing activities might be better understood. Finally, the formulation through this study of a detailed and clear reflective writing framework for the evaluation of such responses might further contribute to this literature.

At the local level, by applying something that has never been put into practice within the academic curriculum and by evaluating and sharing the results obtained through the reflective framework, the results of the study may help teachers to gain a better understanding of the potential engaging and motivating effect of reflective writing on students. The results might help teachers to provide more engaging writing activities and to find better ways of evaluating the students' levels of engagement. It might help learners, especially English Literature students, to become more productive in writing and have opportunities to express their individual ideas in written contexts.

Conclusion

This chapter presented information and discussion about the background of the study, the statement of the problem, the research questions and the significance of the problem. The next chapter reviews the relevant literature on reflective writing, and its effects on writing and learners' perspectives towards writing and literature. In the third chapter, the research methodology, including the participants, instruments, data collection and data analysis procedures, is presented. In the fourth chapter, data analysis procedures and findings are presented. The fifth chapter is the conclusion

chapter which discusses the findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study and makes suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This study analyzes Turkish university students' perceptions of the practice of reflective writing. Additionally, the effects of reflective writing on the way student writers engage with literary works will be examined. The researcher will try to construct a reflective writing framework for the evaluation of engagement in the light of the existing frameworks in the literature and the reflective responses of the sample group written during the study. The study explores the following research questions:

Research Questions

1. What are the participating English Language and Literature students' perceptions of the practice of reflective writing?
2. What is their demonstrated engagement level in the reflective writing process?

This chapter presents a summary of the main approaches employed in L1 and L2 writing education, and how these approaches define the concepts of writing and the writer. A general description of reflective writing and the use of reflective writing in different disciplines will then be given based on the relevant studies in the literature.

Major Trends in Writing

A number of approaches have been developed in order to bring about new understandings of L1 and L2 writing since the 1980s. Even though these trends emerge in chronological order, this does not mean that one theory takes the place of another in succession (Raimes, 1991). Instead of reviewing these trends as somehow competing

against each other, it is more proper to regard them as complementary positions approaching and explaining the same entity from different perspectives. These approaches are complementary parts of a writing curriculum; they are options around which teachers might construct their teaching strategies by focusing on different aspects of writing, such as language structures, the functions of a text, topics and themes, creativeness, content, and the genre of the text (Hyland, 2003a).

Cumming (2001), in a qualitative study conducted both in countries where English is the dominant language and in countries or states where English is an international language, in other words, where English is studied in higher education and used in business but seldom spoken in local communities or homes, found that L2 writing teachers generally employ a varied combination of the methods and focuses of writing. However, even though, on the superficial level, what really takes place in the classroom seems to be an eclectic method compiled from different theories, perspectives, and practices of writing, he also found that in most cases, one writing theory, perspective, or practice overrides the others and affects the design and organization of the curriculum, the application of the course and the evaluation of L2 writing.

In other words, teachers are aware of the range of theories, methods and approaches of writing, but for a number of reasons they have a tendency to concentrate on one of them. Furthermore, throughout their teaching career, the choice of the approach they prioritize in their classroom might show major changes owing to the in-service training they receive, if there is any, the feedback they receive from the learners and other stakeholders, and their own evaluation of their level of success in the application of this particular approach. In some cases, it seems that the major factor

affecting the evaluation and selection of the approach, the decision whether the approach in question will be used for another semester or dropped depends on how much time and effort the method requires of the teacher.

The examination of the major trends in writing will help to understand the possible uses and outcomes of each approach, make the use, strong and weak sides of these approaches more objective, and help our evaluation.

The Product-Oriented Approach

The product-oriented approach emphasizes the grammatical and syntactical structures of the language and it is primarily based on imitating ideal models of other writers. This approach first emerged in the 1960s, which is when, as a result of some methods combining structural linguistics and behaviorism, writing tended to be employed as an exercise to teach grammar through repetition (Silva, 1993). Thus, from the scope of this approach, writing has come to be seen as a behavior which is adopted through grammar and vocabulary tasks, in turn, contributing to the development of structural and lexical skills. One of the priorities of this approach is accuracy of grammar and the organization of the final product. Thus, it mainly focuses on the text by isolating it from the writer. Moreover, this type of approach to writing has a limited scope in terms of the topics of the writings, as stereotypical tertiary curricula adopt the subject of their courses and academic themes as the main focus of their writing (Reid, 1993). Many proponents of the expressive school (Elbow, 1973; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1969; Rohman, 1965) assert that the product-oriented approach is not only detrimental to educational and social values, but also harmful to the discovery and exploration of the self, as it emphasizes the correctness of the product over the individual voice. Murray (1969) explains the negative impact of product-oriented

writing clearly by stating that the grading and revisions of texts ends up with the takeover of the texts by instructors. Therefore, because of the instructors' dominant role in this approach, writers not only lose their texts, but also cannot actively take part in their learning. Critics also argue that, although in the writing process, all elements of language ranging from handwriting, spelling, and punctuation, to grammar and vocabulary are of due importance (Ur, 1996), the traits of writing in terms of the idea making and transmitting these ideas to the reader should be the most important aspect of the writing process (Xiaochun, 2007).

Amiran and Mann (1982), in an analysis of 160 documents on writing in L1, including writing theories, applications and research, state that the writing ability of K-12 learners, even in their native language, is far below the acceptable levels. Their writings lack in richness of vocabulary, critical thinking and creativity. So it is clear that writing both as a line of work and as a discipline has a dramatic problem. This is not because the amount of research focusing on writing and its application in the L1 and L2 environments is limited; rather, writing faces many mismatches between the research and the practice, thus being hampered considerably in its application. Smith (1982), in his handbook addressing the content and methodology of writing programs, argues that even though the majority of teaching professionals and curriculum designers are aware of strategies through which writing instruction could be made more effective, what really takes place in schools is not in line with the findings of this research. What is more (and also worse), leaving aside applying an appropriate writing content and methodology, Smith (1982) states that, in most cases the time and attention allocated to writing is highly compromised.

In a comprehensive study focusing on the research findings and theories about writing, Graves (1978), classifies ways through which writing affects our lives. He envisions writing as a complex action requiring synthesizing and analyzing skills on a reflective scale. It is also the most challenging activity for the learner, both exposing him to an activity in which he would feel fragile, and resulting in sharp escalations in his learning which other activities cannot possibly provide. He finds neglecting such a valuable and effective skill for triggering critical thinking skills, creativity and improvement in learning to be detrimental to learners and learning. However, he also states that allocating more time is not the answer. The *type* of approach used in writing studies has a more significant effect than the instruction time. Employing a product-oriented approach, regarding writing mainly as the accurate organization of lexis and grammar or as an accurately compiled set of letters on the page underestimates the most important aspect of writing: meaning.

Within this approach revolving around the ideal text which is accurate or error-free, learners generally encounter sentence completion, tense transformation, or fill-in-the-blanks exercises embedded into short paragraphs or even into sentences. These exercises barely scratch the surface of real writing as a mental and creative activity because of their strictly controlled artificial nature—though they may be fruitful as grammar and vocabulary drills. Learners produce and reproduce the fixed patterns and what they receive as feedback consists of the correction of their grammar and spelling errors.

The research (Amiran & Mann, 1982; Hillocks, 1986; Holdzkom, 1983; Keech & Thomas, 1979; Parson, 1985; Wesdorp, 1983) which will be reviewed in the following two sections of this chapter, has clearly shown that product-oriented writing

has failed to achieve the desired levels of success in comparison with other approaches to writing; this lower success in the product oriented approach is thought to be derived from its structural and formal focus. Teacher-induced activities put student writers into a situation in which the theme, mode, and even length of the writing is determined by the instructor, who at the same time is the only reader of the writing while grading and scarring the text in red ink. Student writers perform these inflexible writing tasks by focusing on the rules, model texts, and instructions given by the instructor, who acts as if he were the real owner of the text. When student writers complete their texts, and receive them after being corrected and graded by the instructor, it marks the conclusion of their writing, as it is the only step of product oriented writing. The writer does not revisit and revise, let alone reflect on, their writing. The red marks of the instructor dry, while the text is stored in the writer's desk, and the ideas evaporate and diminish devoid of any critical and reflective light which might shed awareness on them (Parson, 1985). In his overview of the transition from more traditional to modern writing techniques, Parson (1985) notes that the conditions listed above make the improvement of writing, the exploration of the self through the text, and thus improvement of other language skills terribly difficult. He associates the inadequacy of product-oriented writing with many characteristics that this approach adopts. Product-oriented writing overestimates both the structural and mechanical aspect of the writing act; at the same time, it ignores the idea-making and meaning-making aspects of the act. From its perspective, writing, thus learning, is an instantaneous phenomenon consisting of the product itself, requiring no revision at all. It builds the construction of the text on model texts, having a grading mechanism not focusing on the individual writer but merely on the linguistic skills. This approach takes its fundamentals from

theoretical assumptions, not from studies and experiments. This isolation of the text from its writer drains the text of its meaning and creativity, and transforms the writing into a still life for the audience and the writer. Because of the inadequacy of the methods of writing, and because of the elaborate, non-linear nature of writing process, many scholars in the writing field have developed alternative techniques to compensate for the ever-changing needs of writing (Cotton, 1982), that is, process-oriented writing.

The Process-Oriented Approach

Process-oriented approaches stand for the formulation of ideas, and the subsequent transformation of these ideas into a meaningful, coherent entity, that is, the text. Rather than being viewed as a body of linguistic and lexical items, writing is considered as a process by which meaning is *created*. The writer produces drafts of the texts throughout the process as many times as is required. These visits and revisits to the texts are not only for the sake of the structural accuracy of the text, but, more significantly, for the clarity, coherence and organization of the way the writer expresses the ideas and the meaning beneath them. Hyland (2003) states that the correct comprehension of structure and lexicon of the language which will be the *medium* of this idea making and expression process is of great importance; however, writing is something more than the sum of those ingredients.

Because of the structural focus of many achievement tests and the pragmatic nature of course assignments, student writers find themselves in a situation which obliges them to approach writing in a structural way, which causes many problems. Hunt (1983) has tried to assess the writing development of student writers in correlation with the use of grammatical items. However, a focus limited to the correctness of grammatical structures is not likely to foster writing; additionally it is

not practical to measure this development through such an approach (Hyland, 2003a). Hyland (2003) suggests that there are many student writers who can do well on the sentence level but because of the fragmented, utilitarian perspective of the product-oriented approach, they cannot build a coherent body of text. Furthermore, the decrease in the number of errors in the texts written by the student writers may not indicate any improvement in linguistic skills; it may also result from a deliberate unwillingness to use complex structures in order to avoid making errors, and so being corrected and getting a low grade. A functional approach to writing does not contribute to improvement; additionally it cannot reach a general framework in terms of *grading*, as there is no consensus as to what constitutes good writing. This results from the communicative function of writing. Thus, regarding writing and the writer as a computer board on which anyone can install anything at any given time, and from which some errors can be uninstalled by simply marking them in red ink yields nothing more than imitators who are strictly monitored (Hyland, 2003a) as both the writer and the sole audience is craving for accuracy.

In order to set writing free from this closed circuit, many writing researchers (Clandinin & Kennard, 1993; Holt-Reynolds, 1991) have suggested that as the producer of the text, due attention should be paid to *the writer*. It is his cognitive skills and social entity that produce the text (Flower, 1994). However, unlike reflective writing, process-oriented writing does not only focus on the undirected expressions of the writer, it also monitors the process through the instructor's guidance, and it also seeks the development of linguistic skills even though these may not be central. Through brainstorming and outlining, the instructor induces some cognitive activities in relation to the topic the student writer will explore, and create the framework of the

structure through which the ideas will be conveyed to the audience. The process-oriented writing consists of many layers. The writer produces drafts, and reproduces them when required after receiving *feedback* about the coherence of the ideas and the structure. However, lexical coherence is given priority over grammar and organization (Raimes, 1998). Ferris (2002) suggests that the correlation between the structural feedback and student writers' development is still vague. In a review focusing on error correction in L2 writing, Truscott (1996) states that the contribution of structural instruction to writing has not been clearly established through research, although it is heavily employed by the product-oriented approach, and even the process-oriented approach somehow adopts this perspective, though it is not the approach's initial or central concern.

The main activities taking place throughout any writing course are the conceptualization, planning, and application of the texts. These activities includes professional expertise, practice, and a good grasp of theories, methods and techniques of writing, and even personal beliefs about writing. However, the reality considering how people prefer to learn writing or how they really learn writing might be a totally different phenomenon deriving its kinesis from a different ground. Process-oriented writing is certainly a step in the right direction because it tries to bridge the gap between structure and meaning. By means of teaching learners topics in parallel with their academic needs, it takes the function and the meaning of the writing act into account, which is what really is required at tertiary level of education.

In a review about a functional and communicative textbook on reading and writing, Cheung (1982) stated that the range of activities consists of note-taking, summarizing and finding main ideas. Learners are guided by the mandatory exercises

about writing a topic sentence, adding supporting ideas, and using linkers. Through these exercises they are taught to *develop* their writing from the sentence level to the paragraph level. The pseudo-free writing activities generally span actions such as putting mixed sentences in order, finding the appropriate sentence to fill a paragraph *meaningfully*, writing *new* paragraphs in the light of the structural information which a paragraph has to have, and using a model paragraph to guide the learner through their *own* creation. In the following section of the textbook the students are presented with the same highly structured activities of the essay level and expected to write essays by strictly following the necessary parts and steps of an ideal essay on topics either chosen by the textbook or the instructor.

The functional characteristics and meaning are certainly part of this set of activities prepared in the light of process oriented writing. However, the structural and highly instructional nature of the textbook and the approach in question underestimates the major concerns of writing: idea making and the writer.

As anyone can easily see from the situation above, in both approaches, that is, product and process oriented writing, a clear link between language and personal development cannot be constructed. Because of the complexity of the writing process, we cannot obtain crystal clear definitions and correlations about the causality of factors. Any method that regards writing merely as a tool for testing, or a manifestation of ideas within the borders which the instructors or perfect model texts provide, underestimates the significance of writing both as linguistic act and personal exploration. Therefore, writing can be better used as an exploration tool for the ideas about a given topic and the writer, rather than a complex tool to reach a less complex goal. This issue will be dealt with in the following section.

Reflective/Creative Writing

Reflective writing is generally seen as the final outcome of, and thus also evidence for, a process of reflective or critical thinking. This process includes focusing on a fact, contemplating and analyzing this particular fact from various stances, and reaching the final product, emphasizing the individual writer and the writing process rather than merely the outcome itself, as is the case in other writing approaches. This process does not aim to produce a description of facts devoid of individual voice and genuine perspective; rather, it entails an elaborate and genuine exploration and explanation of a particular fact, and through this it demands an excursion into the *self*. Through this inner journey the writer, who, in fact, is the underlying but at the same time de facto if not de jure focus of the writing, reveals not only anxieties, errors and weaknesses, but also strengths and successes by reflecting, and seeks the way of self betterment and bringing about new solutions to new problems.

The writer stands out from the structural and formal mandate, and takes his rightful place in the writing process. As writing theorists Elbow (1998) and Murray (2004) underline, the major purposes of writing classes and activities should be centered around the expressive ability of learners. Writing classes and activities should help learners to find new, real experiences to express themselves according to their individual personalities whose exploration is another major goal of writing. Freire (1974) suggested that employing writing in the reinforcement of creativity and expressivism might promote the recognition of the writer's position in his educational, social, individual, and even moral settings. Moffett (1982) argued that writing should be utilized as a tool in thought promotion and in raising the individual awareness of the

writer. For him, these abilities and writing cannot be taught because they are individual and cannot be directed. This trait of writing makes exercises focusing on model paragraphs or essays, identification of topic sentences, or the use of accurate connectors, idle or redundant. Rather, writing classes should be a place to trigger and promote new horizons, and writing teachers should focus on the idea-creation and promotion process rather than on grammatical or lexical errors (Straub, 2000). Writing draws its source from explorations by means of the topics and texts, which means the instructor of an expressive writing course should adopt creativity and expressivism in his readings and writings.

The reflective practice might be called a contemplation, a mixture of an in-depth analysis and critical and creative thinking, which eventually leads to the internalization of what the writer has elaborated on by coming up with distinctions between what he has been exposed to up to the point where reflection takes place and what he, himself, has unearthed, what was not superficial, and what was unknown even to him. In some instances, reflective practice serves a transmitting function in order to inform the reader and enable a more transparent portal to emerge, through which both the writer and reader might capture their individual voices, if not step into the realm of individuality. Moreover, it also empowers the writer to grow by means of writing by analyzing and narrating his personal perspective about a certain fact, and reviewing and revising what has been written.

Since learning is addressed as the construction or creation of a meaningful whole, and the transmission of this entity, it is a highly complex nonlinear process. Writing cannot be handled as merely putting some acquired ideas into text, rather, it requires the creation of new content and the adjustment of it in such a way that it will

appeal to readers and the writer himself. Throughout the writing process, these newly formed ideas are subject to change, and they inevitably evolve into more complex forms giving rise to new ideas. Thus, writing is more like a discovery of *the self* and the invention of new concepts to be transmitted to the reader and to the writer in the text (Flower & Hayes, 1981). While novice writers generally follow a knowledge-telling model of writing, which merely consists of the ideas and concepts which the writer has been exposed to, and cannot go beyond being a report, expert writers follow a knowledge-transforming model of writing, which requires retrieval of information chunks through different parts of the writing process, developing complex plans, elaborating on them, and modifying them extensively throughout the writing process (Cumming, Bereiter, & Scardamalia, 1989). As this process obliges writers to develop a full awareness of what they are doing and the likely outcome of the process, it also requires high levels of reflection. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) suggest that the reflective process does not entail a simple development of knowledge-telling model of writing; it not only changes the way the writer sees the writing process, but it also involves a major evolution in *how* the writer conducts the writing process. The writer might set out writing with some preconceived ideas and concept in his mind; however, what the writer actually does is not just to put these concepts within the context by means of prefabricated symbols, phrases, and sentences. Instead, the writer encounters constantly emerging ideas and concepts which were inert and unfamiliar to the writer before he started the writing process. These encounters result in circular reconstructions in the content space, the rhetorical space, and the writer throughout the writing process (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). Research (Kaufer et al., 1986) has shown that the writer does not transfer complete sentences, which are already present

in his mind, into the text, but he compiles and combines *bursts* of sentence parts; and this coherent combination process does not only take place in the mind, it needs to be transcribed into a text, which allows the writer to approach the text, and himself as independent entities. This process entails a constant reviewing and revision of the text, and the addition of newly discovered aspects to it, through which the writer actually reviews and revises himself, and unearths new aspects to be incorporated into his previous *self*, which seems to require a high level of reflection both on the linguistic aspects of the medium language, the present ideas in his mind, and on the writer as a person.

In a series of studies on differences between spoken and written production, Bourdin and Fayol (1994) found that there were no significant differences between the production efficiency of spoken and written responses of adults in easy tasks. However, when the complexity of the written tasks is greater, the written performance of adults was found to be much worse than in the previous tasks. The main implication of these studies is that even for the adults who have the required grammatical and lexical competence to produce a text; writing tasks demanding complex cognitive processes is a difficult activity. Thus, it is not wrong to assert that the mastery of structure and vocabulary of a language is not the only element affecting the quality and richness of the writing process. In addition, in studies comparing the effectiveness of different drafting strategies on writing efficiency, Kellogg (1996) evaluated the quality of two groups of writers using rough drafting and a hierarchically organized outline. Kellogg (1990; 1996) concluded that an effective outline strategy which takes place prior to the text's production and enables the writer to withdraw from the text and return to the outline of his ideas throughout the writing process, by which means he

can monitor the writing process in terms of its quality and richness and reconstruct it in any phase, along with the ideas themselves, helps the writer to review and revise the text according to his predetermined criteria, which are also subject to change as the text develops. This process leads to a better organization of ideas by providing more resources for the writer and giving him a space to reflect on the text and the writing process. The most important implication of these studies is that L1 and L2 writing should be seen as non-linear processes, having strong correlations not only with structural and lexical competence, rather than an instantaneous event, but also a well-founded organization of ideas and a rigorous reflection on them.

Writing is a means of constructing meaning and communicating it to the reader, as well as to the awareness of the writer, which requires reflection on the experience and on the process itself. It consists of an indefinite number of constructions, deconstructions, and reconstructions of the text in the laboratory of the mind and the paper. Writing goes beyond being a mere documentary evidence of learning; rather, it is learning resulting from the constant communication between the same individual as a writer and as a reader, through which the writer contemplates, reflects on, informs himself and constructs the learning process. It is a creative and an artistic response to the challenges of the past or future continuum of the writer's time line. Knowledge results in writing; reflecting on this knowledge and writing about it result in knowledge. Knowledge, learning, and writing are not isolated entities free from the gravitational pull of the individual experiences by which means we approach these entities, reflect on them, and communicate them to another individual's sensory field, who might also be the writer himself. Capra (1996, p. 97-98) suggests that all living systems more or less engage in the activity of "autopoiesis" which is a closed

system capable of creating and recreating itself. This process, taking place within the organism, activates then wires and rewires all the components of the organism. From the connections between these components this “self-making” arises, and from this “self-making” these components arise. Therefore, while organizing its own activities, the system *creates* a new *self*. Mingers (1994) suggests that this trait enabling organisms in self-making is not confined to the biological processes organisms go through, but is also applicable to cognitive and intellectual processes. Through organizing and reflecting on experiences of the language, we strive to come up with meaning; and this meaning is what constitutes learning. Learning stands for change, leading to reflection, requiring observation and explanation, which gives the opportunity to others (and to the writer) to observe explanations. Luhmann (1995) suggests that for an event to be transformed into learning, it should be absorbed by the human consciousness. Writing is the observation of this particular connection between the event and consciousness. The event, its meaning and its explanation are tightly interdependent; and reflection combines them. It is reflection that metabolizes them and condenses them back into meaning. Through this meaning-making, human consciousness draws boundaries, and *creates* new connections, and a new writer emerges from the text.

The negative arguments about reflective writing arise from the time limitations of teachers in their instructional activities. Instructors report that they do not know strategies to integrate reflectivity into their writing lessons. The time spent on reflective activities might seem like a time which produces nothing but pages of ideas which cannot be graded based on ordinary frameworks. Even though students achieve an *acceptable* level of reflectivity, teachers might think that they lack the structural and

organizational skills to express these reflections effectively. These counter arguments can go on for pages; however, some of education boards (Writing Study Group of the NCTE Executive Committee, 2004) regard writing as a tool of thinking and problem solving. Through writing, the writer constructs new questions and revisits himself even in the issues which were coped with. This perspective clearly sees writing as a medium of exploration and self discovery, rather than the memorization, identification and mandatory use of the parts of a paragraph or essay. This idea supports the validity of the argument for the use of reflective writing in personal growth, analysis of the self and in determining the writer's place in the progression through which the writer and the text might be refined and enhanced. Reflective writing might be regarded as a means of self observation and self evaluation, in which the writer discovers his own abilities, ideas, and lessons he will use throughout his life.

J.K. Rowling's (2000) imaginary character of Dumbledore provides a very comprehensive definition of reflection in one volume of the Harry Potter novels, although this type of reflection is not in the writing form. The *Pensieve*, which is a stone basin, is presented as a tool which enables people to reflect upon thoughts and ideas that are unclear or unknown to the thinker:

“...I simply have too many thoughts and memories crammed into my mind. ... At these times I use the Pensieve. One simply siphons the excess thoughts from one's mind, pours them into a basin, and examines them at one's leisure. It becomes easier to spot patterns and links, you understand, when they are in this form.” (Rowling, 2000, pp. 518-519)

Dumbledore uses this simple stone basin, in the present study the blank paper or a computer screen, as a means of self reflection through which he explores that attain understanding. He remembers by seeing the memories, or writing about the events, classifies the events on this thinking board, which he uses as a platform for

reflection on events related to him. The Pensieve is a mirror through which Dumbledore might observe himself in the events that he was trying to grasp the core of. His stone basin and bottled memories or our reading texts and written documents of reflections about them are the paths which allow us to stand back and attain a self understanding through the analysis of other related events. This understanding leads to more engagement with events of this sort and more reflection on the experiences of the thinker. In other words, the comprehension and personalization of literary texts leads to more engagement with literature and more reflection on these works and the self.

In his brief description of reflectivity, Gibbs (1988) identifies the reasons for adopting a reflective stance even in relation to a daily event in order to derive a comprehensive understanding of the event, and turn this vague memory into a vivid experience. He states that having the experience is not enough to lead to learning both about the event and about the thinker. Reflecting on this event fosters the memory of it and gives rise to a learning situation. From reflection, new concepts, engagement and generalizations arise, and future situations may be solved through this chain of thoughts. Moon (1999) identifies reflection as a mental process activated to comprehend multilayered events or vague ideas, which the thinker cannot achieve a clear solution to through conventional methods. She briefly lists the reasons directing a person to reflection. The person engages into the act of reflection to revive his learning process or critically revisit an event or a reading to achieve a general approach to similar events or things. That particular person seeks self development through comprehending unclear situations whose solution might carry the thinker to a higher level of self understanding as things get clearer. Gibbs (1988) and Kolb (1984) identify the main stages of an ideal reflection. A brief description and the feelings about the

event should be followed by the evaluation and the analysis of that particular event. However, the thinker, or writer should come up with both general and specific conclusions pertaining to the event.

Hatton and Smith (1995) classify reflective writings in four categories in accordance with the depth of reflection in the writings. These categories can be listed as descriptive writing, descriptive reflection, dialogic reflection, and critical reflection. Totally rejecting the first category as it is devoid of reflection, and not finding the second one really reflective because of its descriptive nature, Hatton and Smith (1995) focus on the third and the fourth categories, as these reveal the real signs of reflection on the side of the writer. Dialogic reflection requires the writer to adopt the attitude of a third person, observe the event as an outsider, get into a conversation with the self, and identify the event and his position in the event. At this stage, the signs of judgment, creating alternative perspectives of the event, and hypothesizing takes place. The thinker tries to analyze of the event, integrate it with other related events, and reach a more comprehensive level of perception. Critical reflection, which is further elaborated on by Murray and Kujundzic (2005), requires that the thinker revise and question the reflective experience from different perspectives. It leads the thinker to construct an assumption from the material at hand, triggering the reflective process, and it requires an awareness of the social, personal and cultural contexts of the event. Even though the thinker achieves a plausible solution, he should strive for alternative perspectives considering the event, paving the way for an in-depth understanding of it. The thinker should aim at reaching a level of skepticism by which he seeks for universals by weeding out the unsupported facts.

The taxonomy developed by Krathwohl, Bloom, and Masia, (1964) might be seen as the starting point for evaluating the levels of critical thinking, creativity and reflectivity. This base taxonomy consists of six categories: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation. However, Anderson and Krathwohl (2001) offered an alternative taxonomy based on a previous model. This alternative taxonomy consists of the categories of remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, evaluating and creating. This second taxonomy seems more appropriate for evaluating reflectivity in writing because it includes the creation category, which might stand for constructing new ideas following the reflection. In this study, some categories from the above mentioned taxonomies are used to construct a framework for the evaluation of the reflective responses of student writers in response to open-ended questions about literary works.

As mentioned in the previous chapter and also in this one, research has shown that reflective writing is a significant tool in education programs (Clandinin & Kennard, 1993) for aiding the exploration of *the self* by giving learners an opportunity to evaluate and design new approaches to new challenges. Some studies of reflective writing have focused on the use of this writing approach with pre-service and in-service teachers. These studies evaluated the effect of reflective writing on teaching methods and techniques and their applications (Daloglu, 2001; Richards, 1998; Tsang, 1996; Woodfield, 1998). These studies concluded that reflective writing is an invaluable method to help writers achieve an in-depth understanding of theories through personalization, application, and creation of their links with philosophies and practices (Good & Whang, 2002).

However, to the knowledge of the researcher, the number of studies focusing on reflective writing in L2 is limited, perhaps because this type of activity requires a high level of English proficiency to conduct (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Lee, 2007). The focus of these studies conducted with high level L2 learners mostly explored the effect of reflective writing on the linguistic abilities of the learners, and to the researcher's knowledge, there is no study focusing on the effect of reflective writing on the sense of involvement and engagement of the learners. Therefore, the results of this study may contribute to the literature by revealing some insights into the effects of reflective writing on the comprehension of literary works and on the sense of involvement and engagement of Turkish students in an English Language and Literature department. Moreover, developing a framework in the light of the existing frameworks mentioned earlier in this chapter for the evaluation of reflective responses might bring an alternative perspective to the literature.

Review of the Literature on the Evaluation of Engagement Levels

Introduction

Developments in the field of education have brought a new surge of interest in evaluating the acquisition and development of learning by evaluating items ranging from learners' responses to learning situations (Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000). In the evaluation of the elements within the learning process, some studies have placed significant importance on the tools that are related to the engagement levels of learners (Aarnoutse & Schellings, 2003; Carruthers, 1997; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Hall, 2005; Jewell, 2008; Mathewson, 1994).

Although the above mentioned studies have concluded that the engagement levels of learners have a direct association with their level of success in the teaching/learning environment, these conclusions show great variations because of the difference of the definition of engagement in different studies.

The main aim of this section is to explore the major elements of engagement by means of reviewing the relevant studies in literature, and to have a detailed look at research studies to find the methods used to evaluate involvement levels. In the light of the accumulated knowledge, the final aim is to develop a comprehensive framework that will be used in the evaluation of the reflective responses that were provided with the sample group of the present study. This framework might provide educators with an alternative assessment method which could be used in the evaluation of the engagement levels of learners in written responses.

Engagement: A Definition of the Term

As mentioned in the previous section, engagement levels of learners have been used in various contexts to evaluate their success levels. However, the ways those studies evaluated engagement levels show differences, as they define the term differently. Often, studies have looked at the time that the students spared for a particular task as the indicator of engagement levels (Brophy, 1983; Fisher et al., 1980; McIntyre et al., 1983). The time-based index (i.e. time-on-task) regards engagement in positive correlation with the time spent for that particular task.

Other studies in the literature (Kelly, 2008; Nystrand & Gamoran, 1991, Natriello, 1984) have expanded the definition of engagement by including different elements within the term. For example, Natriello (1984) described engagement as the eagerness of the learners to take part in teaching/learning activities of the school

program. This study classifies cheating on exams, coming late or being absent without a firm excuse, and damaging items in the class or in the school as the negative signs of engagement. In other words, this study suggests a positive correlation between engagement and compliance with the school and course requirements, that is, students' level of effort in meeting the school and the course expectations.

Skinner & Belmont (1993) have brought another dimension to the term by including cognitive, behavioural, and affective elements of engagement in teaching/learning situations. They suggest that engagement is directly related to the emotional quality of involvement in initiating and following the activities. Engaged learners demonstrate constant behavioural involvement in the activities in a positive emotional mode. They volunteer to take part even in activities above their competencies. They like to start teaching/learning activities when provided with the environment and opportunity. They adopt these activities and sustain their concentration throughout the activities without any major decrease in the effort they exert in the course. The major indicators of engagement are enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest.

Pintrich et al. (1992) have brought another perspective to the term and associated engagement with use of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies and with the autonomy of learners in the design and control of their learning. So, engagement is motivated behaviour and it can be classified according to the types of cognitive strategy learners use. In other words, engagement levels increase as the learners move from the surface-level activities such as rehearsal, and approach deeper-level activities such as elaboration with a sustained willingness and autonomy and authority over their learning behaviours.

In the light of the studies mentioned above, engagement can be regarded as cognitive involvement, active and voluntary participation, and having a positive emotional attitude toward learning and learning activities. Pintrich et al. (1992) classify the elements of engagement under three categories:

Cognitive elements; these include the level of learners' mental attendance in the learning activities, and the level of energy they exert in the learning situation provided for them. Those might include the efforts to construct links between new knowledge and previous knowledge, and to use cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies to control and direct tasks.

Behavioural elements; these include the range of learners' activeness in responses to the learning situations. These might include activeness in asking questions related to the teaching/learning activities, efforts to bring about solutions to the challenges, and initiating and taking part in productive discussions leading to alternative solutions to the challenges with other members in the environment.

Affective elements; these include the level of students' involvement in, and emotional responses to, the teaching/learning activities. These might include high levels of interest or positive attitudes towards learning activities.

Tools to Assess the Engagement Level Used in the Relevant Literature

The engagement level of students or teachers in activities and tasks or in a piece of work throughout a certain process has been determined by various tools in different research studies. Self-reports are the main tools used in the related literature. In the next section, the tools which have been used to assess the engagement levels of the language learners in different studies will be focused on.

Self-Reports

In the evaluation of the various aspects of engagement, that is, behavioural, cognitive and affective aspects, self-reports have been used. For the evaluation of the cognitive aspects, the learners are asked to report their attention status throughout the activity, the amount of mental effort exerted in the activity, and their levels of participation in the tasks. Other aspects of the evaluation of engagement might include the integration of the concepts encountered in previous lessons and the learners' responses to possible failures in comprehension. For the evaluation of behavioural engagement levels, students may be asked to report their responses, and the number of responses they made throughout the discussions and interactions. For the evaluation of affective engagement, students may be asked to report their interest levels and emotions pertaining to learning situations. The difficulty level of the activities that the learners are willing to take part in, their eagerness to learn more about a topic, and their motivation and willingness to carry out a new task, can indicate their levels of affective engagement.

Self-report measurement has been in use in research in the form of a questionnaire including many items. For example, Guthrie and Wigfield (2000) indicate that learners' engagement levels can be effectively seen in their learning beliefs and expectations. Other studies have suggested that engagement levels can be traced in autonomy (Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992), learners' interest levels in the activities (Schiefele, 1991), and willingness to reach an in-depth understanding through use of cognitive and meta-cognitive skills (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988).

Cognitive, affective and behavioural aspects have often been used in combination to evaluate engagement, even though there are some separate indexes designed to specific instructional goals. In any case, separate or combined, no instrument can comprehensively evaluate the dimensions of reflectivity.

In most engagement scales, attitude and interest are evaluated together because they are regarded as intertwined. Olson and Zanna (1993) define attitude as a positive or negative tendency toward objects or actions. Research focusing on interest (Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992; Schiefele, 1991) has classified it into two categories: individual and situational interests. The former denotes the permanent feelings pertaining to the activities, whereas the latter signifies temporary, activity specific feelings. Guthrie and Wigfield, (2000) suggest that individual interests bear similarities with attitudes and intrinsic motivation. Thus, many scales designed to evaluate the learners' engagement levels take attitudes and both interest categories into account.

Some studies (Meece, Blumenfeld, & Hoyle, 1988) have focused on the learners' cognitive levels in the teaching/learning activities in the evaluation of engagement levels. In those studies, learners were asked to report whether they used cognitive, meta-cognitive strategies or surface level strategies in the activities. The cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies, such as persisting in the activity despite challenges and trying to construct links between previous topics and learnt concepts, indicated active deep engagement in the activities, but surface level or shallow strategies, such as ignoring the challenging parts of an activity, dodging the open-ended questions with the possible shortest answers, indicated superficial engagement. In addition to the use of deep and surface learning strategies, in their evaluation of the learners' engagement levels, Miller et al. (1996) also included persistence and effort

into their scale to assess the variation in the responses to the learning activities at different difficulty levels and the effort learners exerted in those different situations.

One strong advantage of self-report measures is that as well as providing information about whether the learners are engaged or disengaged, they can indicate the reasons behind these two situations. For example, in a study about goal theory, motivation and achievement, Covington (2000) has found positive relationships between goals and the use of effective learning strategies. This relationship indicates that the eagerness to learn the subject matter activates the deeper learning strategies, and hence engagement. Midgley et al. (2000) designed scales, called the Patterns of Adaptive Learning Survey (PALS), for the evaluation of goal orientation. Strickland (1989) and Thompson et al. (1998) found a positive correlation between the levels of adaptation to learning environment and learners' control over the learning situation. Several researchers have developed scales to evaluate learners' control levels (Skinner, Wellborn, & Connell, 1990; Strickland, 1989; Thompson et al., 1998).

Zimmerman and Schunk (1994) have found a relation between learners' engagement, confidence, self-efficacy and learning outcomes. Usher and Pajares (2009) developed assessment scales to evaluate specific areas such as mathematics. Moreover, Bandura (2001) developed a framework to help teachers to design specific scales for their subject areas.

Checklists and Rating Scales

In addition to students' self-report measures, some studies have also developed and used rating scales to assess engagement levels. Skinner and Belmont (1993) and Skinner et al. (1990) used teacher-report scales in the evaluation of willingness to take part in teaching/learning activities. The questions in the teacher-report scales partly

focus on information about learners' effort, attention, and persistence in the activities. The scales also have items evaluating learners' emotional status during the activities, such as interest, boredom, happiness, sadness, anxiety, and anger. Sweet and Guthrie (1994) and Sweet, Guthrie and Ng (1998) developed a questionnaire to evaluate teachers' perceptions of learners' motivation in reading activities. This questionnaire includes questions focusing on the factors indicating learners' engagement levels. Teachers were asked to report about learners' attitudes toward the activities, whether the learners enjoy reading, learners' autonomy, whether the learners can initiate reading activities and choose a book by themselves, and individual factors, whether the learners are easily distracted throughout the reading activities.

Direct Observations

In the literature there are many observation examples designed to evaluate learners' engagement, though they are made up from very broad items (Ellett, Loup, & Chauvin, 1991; Ysseldyke & Christenson, 1993). Direct observations are used as a complementary component to learners' self-reports to increase the reliability of the latter. Assor and Connell (1992) state that the data obtained from learners' self-report scales may show substantial differences because of the possible variations in the students' ability to evaluate themselves accurately. In other words, individual variations in self-evaluations might bring about subjectivity in the evaluation of cognitive and affective features and behaviours. Thus, the possible variations and the subjectivity factor in the learners' self reports might be balanced through the use of direct observations.

For example, Greenwood et al. (1994) evaluate learners' engagement levels based on their behaviours. Their willingness in attending teaching/learning activities

such as reading from the blackboard, working on reading, and searching for teaching materials, are among the indicators of learners' engagement in such scales.

Even though these studies do not agree on the terms which they use in the definition of engagement, they make use of more or less similar methods; that is, the time-sampling methods in which the observer or the grader monitors the behaviour at issue and records if the sample presents the behaviour within the time period assigned for the observation, such as one minute or even 10 seconds. Behaviours monitored through that specific length of time are classified as engaged or disengaged. Through these methods, engagement levels and associated behaviours, and the frequency of such behaviours can be recorded and explored more reliably and rigorously. These observation methods focus on individual learners; however, there are also other observation methods focusing on the whole class, or focusing on the different class members in a row, allocating nearly five minutes for each member in a lesson, allowing the observer to obtain more complete data about a particular learner's engagement level and insight into the interaction and correlation among learners, through which it is revealed whether the group dynamics interfere with the engagement level of individual learners.

In cases where multiple observers are used, it is important to take measures to achieve more standardized observations and ratings; to do this, a pre-study should be conducted to ensure that the observers are more or less on the same lines in the interpretation of the factors indicating engagement. In this pre-study, the observers/raters should evaluate the same set of learners in a discussion session and/or their written responses; following this, they should compare their ratings for the

particular subject. The average final scores of one observer pertaining to one subject should be parallel to the other observer/rates in order to attain an inter-rater reliability.

Work Sample Analysis

By focusing on the evaluation of cognitive and meta-cognitive strategies used by learners in a given task, some researchers have made use of work samples in the assessment of the engagement levels of the learners. The indicators of these strategies might be traced in projects, portfolios, performances, exhibitions, journals, logs, and the written responses of the learners (Royer, Cisero, & Carlo, 1993). Some very effective assessment methods have been provided by Hart (1994) pertaining to the evaluation of the performances of learners. These methods have been achieved through the formulation and implementation of well designed rubrics or frameworks.

Radford (1995) defines a number of norms which should be integrated into parts of an effective framework. A framework to assess learners' critical thinking skills in their written responses should take such components into account as problem solving, the evaluation of the target material by the learner resulting in a self evaluation, personalizing the material, or even hypothesizing on it. Many frameworks which are designed to evaluate the learning strategies of learners included metacognitive traits into their norms (Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992; Ward & Traweek, 1993; Zimmerman & Schunk, 1994). Metacognitive Knowledge Monitoring Assessment by Tobias & Everson (1996) and the Assessment of Cognitive Monitoring Effectiveness by Osborne (2001) have been piloted in many experimental assessments and proved to be useful in many classroom situations.

Focused Case Studies

In order to obtain in-depth understanding of engagement levels, it may be better to focus the study on a small group rather than a large class. This concentration of attention will yield a more detailed and descriptive account of the individual members of the group and their interaction with each other, and with the influential agents on the learners' engagement levels. Focused case studies offer an advantage over other approaches, as they tend to describe learners' observable behaviours and the context of these behaviours through a more integrated approach. This integrated group of items which is focused on this particular approach might include the behaviour of the target learners and their peers, teachers' instructions and all other directions which are thought to have an effect on the environment, and the resulting behaviours of the learners in response to these instructions and directions. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested the use of techniques such as field notes, context-maps and sketches in the recording of the observations which might be used in the depiction of the learners' engagement levels.

A Framework to Assess Student Engagement in Reflective Writing

In this current study, a framework was formed in order to assess learners' engagement levels in the reflective writing process by reviewing the related studies. In the light of the relevant literature, seven items were labeled as reflective writing indicators in the framework, each of which has two sublevels. The items of *Awareness*, *Analysis*, *Synthesis*, *Hypothesizing*, *Self-Regulation*, *Personalization* and *Involvement* are thought to be the most important indicators of engagement level in the reflective

writing process and thus the framework in this study included those items to assess the engagement level.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the main trends in writing, and reflective writing were reviewed. Their definitions, their educational uses and the evaluation of these approaches were discussed. Some frameworks, employed in the evaluation of reflectivity and creativity, were briefly defined. It has been argued that the effective use of reflective writing enhances learners' engagement in learning activities. In the literature, the effect of reflective writing on the motivation and engagement of L2 Literature students in the literature has not been examined. The present study will attempt to fill this gap by evaluating a group of Turkish students' perceptions of reflective writing and its effects on engagement in writing and literature throughout a nine week reflective writing programme by means of interviews with the sample group about the reflective process, and by constructing an alternative framework in the light of the existing frameworks in the literature and the reflective responses provided by the sample group. In the next chapter, the research tools and methodological procedures will be discussed, and information about the setting and the participants will be provided.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

English Language and Literature students' perceptions of the practice of reflective writing, of its effects on their engagement in writing and literature, were evaluated through this study.

At the local scale, the present study aimed at exploring whether reflective writing has an enhancing effect on the comprehension of literary works and on the sense of involvement and engagement in the writing process of students in the department of English Language and Literature at Cumhuriyet University in Sivas.

The study explores the following research questions:

1. What are the participating English Language and Literature students' perceptions of the practice of reflective writing?
2. What is their demonstrated engagement level in the reflective writing process?

This chapter presents the setting and participants of the study, the instruments used for data collection, and the procedures of data collection and data analysis.

Setting

This study was conducted in the second term of the 2010-2011 academic year at the Department of English Language and Literature (ELL), Faculty of Humanities at Cumhuriyet University in Sivas, Turkey. All the participants were first year students in the English Literature Department. They had received education in the Foreign Languages Department for the preparatory programme.

Courses in the preparatory school consist of the lessons including listening & speaking, reading, writing, vocabulary, grammar, and a main integrated course to reinforce and combine the skills that are targeted in the other courses. The instructional week consists of 28 hours, with the main course taking the lead at 8 hours a week.

Participants

The participants in this study were six upper-intermediate students (three male and three female) from the English Language and Literature Department of Cumhuriyet University. They volunteered to take part in the study when the study and its procedure were announced at the end of the first term. The students, aged between 18 and 24, had been studying English for 9-13 years. All of the participants received intensive English throughout their one year in the prep school. At the time of the study, they were taking courses from the English Language and Literature Department, mostly focusing on English Literature. However, they were also taking courses focusing on linguistic skills, namely advanced reading and writing. In addition to the students, three instructors from the school were also involved in the study. The reading and discussion sessions and the interviews at the end of the programme were conducted by the researcher. In the analysis of the responses, along with the researcher, two other instructors from the Preparatory School at Cumhuriyet University read and evaluated the responses in accordance with the reflective writing framework.

The aforementioned instructors are EFL teachers at Cumhuriyet University. The researcher/instructor has been teaching English for nine years. He is a graduate of an English Language Teaching department, and for the last four years, he has been teaching both the main course and the video studies course at the prep school. He taught this study's participants for 12 hours weekly during their prep year, and was

therefore well aware of their individual differences, attitudes, needs and expectations. The other two instructors who read and evaluated the reflective responses of the participants are also working in the prep school and had offered reading and writing classes to the students who made up the participant group. One of the instructors, who has been teaching for 6 years, had been responsible for their reading course (4 hours a week), and she knew their reading abilities and attitudes toward reading. The other instructor, who has been teaching for 15 years, had been responsible for their writing course (4 hours a week), and thus had an in depth understanding of the learners' individual writing capacities. The inclusion of these instructors into the study for the evaluation part was very helpful, as these instructors were very familiar with the learners' reading and writing proficiency, how engaged they were during the prep year in the writing process, to what extent their creative capacity lay in writing a critical piece about a given topic, and their interest in different literary works.

Instruments

The instruments used for this study consisted of the learners' reflective responses, a reflective writing framework, and interviews with the students asking about their attitudes towards the reflective writing process.

Reflective Responses

The researcher chose six literary works before the programme. These items were deliberately selected from different literary genres, namely, excerpts from short stories, poems by two poets, and excerpts from novels. These works were pieces not covered by their four year literature curricula. This selection was meant to increase the learners' curiosity and to avoid the idea that they showed interest in the study only to

support their other lectures. Including different genres of literature might be seen as a disadvantage, as the reading loads of a short poem and an excerpt from a short story are not the same. However, reading multiple excerpts from two short stories is also not same. Achieving a straight process of reading, free from linguistic and lexical fluctuations, is hardly possible. In terms of literary genre and reading load, these items may represent fundamental differences for the study. But in terms of reflectivity, reflecting on a poem and reflecting on a short story do not represent significantly different processes.

In line with the previous reading/discussion course conducted by the researcher, the literary texts were chosen by the researcher, and were intended to be straightforward, appealing and not likely to appear in other courses at the university.

The following texts were used in the study:

1. *Landscape and Silence* plays by Harold Pinter (Faber, 1991, 1969)
2. "To room nineteen" by Doris May Lessing from *To Room Nineteen v. 1: Collected Stories* (Cape, 1978)
3. Some poems by Stephen Crane, from *Black Riders and other lines* (Penguin Books, 1983)
4. Some haikus by Matsuo Basho *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* (Penguin Books, 1966)
5. "Mother and Daughter" by D.H. Lawrence (Selected short stories) (Penguin Books, 1989)
6. "Girl" a short story by Jamaica Kincaid, from the collection named *At the Bottom of the River* (Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1984)

Each week the researcher and the six student-writers gathered in one of the seminar halls of the School of Foreign Languages and read out-loud some parts of the literary texts together for the first time. These parts were determined by the researcher before the reading sessions. The reading and discussion sessions were not strictly separated. Rather, discussions began as “while-reading activities” in which the role of the researcher was that of a facilitator. Without addressing any specific questions at this stage, the students raised comments about the text spontaneously. Following the reading, some open-ended questions about the target text were given to the students, to be responded to in writing. The question sets consisted of five to 10 questions urging the student writers to reflect on the text and provide personal ideas about the text, rather than writing a mere summary of it. They were told that the reflective responses were not going to be graded, nor were they going to receive any grammatical feedback. The students were told they did not have to write responses to all the questions, and the responses did not have any word limits, either maximum or minimum. The students did not have any time limit for the delivery of the responses; however, they were advised to write their responses within the following week in order to benefit from the fresh memory of the reading. In order not to deform the free nature of the study, they participants were told that they could use their native language when they felt that they could not express a certain set of ideas in English. In most situations, except for one or two paragraphs in the first two responses, the reflective responses were written in English.

Reflective Framework

In the development of the reflective writing framework, the starting point was the commonly accepted characteristics of creative/reflective writing, such as depth of reflectivity. The initial items included in the framework were the involvement / engagement of the writers, the personalization of the responses, and the open-ended and hypothesizing features of the response. The framework was greatly modified during the data analysis of the written responses and the transcriptions of the interviews. The researcher first relied on the literature to form a proto-framework by listing and elaborating on the main features of reflectivity. He then consulted his colleagues, and based on these informal interviews, noted their responses to the question “what are the fundamental aspects of engagement?” In order to reach a broader perspective considering the answer to this question, the researcher created an e-mail chain, requesting some writing teachers and researchers worldwide to list their ideas about the indicators of engagement and involvement in both written and oral responses of learners. By using the virtual space provided by Prezi online software, the teachers and researchers listed their ideas briefly on the webpage, whose URL and access code were also given in the request mail, and thus functioned as a data pool for the formulation of the framework. In total, 35 different aspects were created by omitting repetitions and combining related aspects. In order to relate each of the proposed items to the evaluation of engagement, the researcher then tried to find research studies that had used these items in their research on engagement. Finally, to give the list its final shape, negotiation was also made with another instructor who also contributed to the study as a coder. Only in disagreements about the categories in the framework and the classification of the written responses in these categories, the ideas

of a third instructor were called for. By categorizing the items, the researcher constructed a framework for evaluating the written responses. To use the framework, numbers were given by the coders under each category to indicate the occurrences of that category in the students' written responses. That is to say, the greater the number of occurrences, the more engaged the student writers are thought to be. The proto-framework was updated and upgraded throughout the study; therefore, only the final framework is presented in the Data Analysis chapter.

Interviews

The interview sessions were conducted at the end of the nine-week reading, discussion and reflective response writing process. Each student was interviewed on a separate day in order not to turn the interviews into a repetitive and mechanical act. The time schedules were arranged according to the preferences of the participants. The one to one interviews were done in a quiet, comfortable atmosphere where the participants would not feel under pressure. The researcher conducted the interviews in his office. He asked for permission to record the interviews and also mentioned that if students did not want to be recorded, he could take notes. None of the participants refused to be recorded. In order to avoid problems related to language barriers, the interviews were conducted in their L1 (Turkish). The questions focused on their attitudes towards the reflective writing process and towards literature. The main interview questions are listed below:

- 1) Which form of literature (poems, excerpts from plays, short stories and novels) appealed to you most? Why?
- 2) What, if any, were your initial fears and difficulties about writing responses?
- 3) Have you managed to get over them? How?

- 4) What were the highlights of this experiment for you?
- 5) Were there any low points or dull moments? Please specify.
- 6) In what way do you think this experiment may have helped your literary knowledge?
- 7) Do you think there might have been some negative or unhelpful aspects? If yes, describe them.
- 8) Has writing responses influenced the way you THINK about life in general and literature in particular? How?

The average length of an interview ranged from 30 minutes to one hour.

Data Collection Procedures

At the end of the first term of 2010-2011, the researcher contacted the head of the English Language and Literature Department for permission to conduct the study. The ethics committee of the faculty did not find any problems in conducting the study, as long as the recruiting procedure was done in a voluntary way and the responses would not have an impact on students' school programme or scores. The study was announced to the freshmen and sophomores. Following the announcement, a total of 59 students volunteered for the study. The recruitment was ultimately made from among the freshmen only because the workload of the sophomores was too heavy to spare time for extra studies. Among the 23 freshmen volunteers, the researcher selected six of them in correlation with their reading and writing scores from the preparatory year, and their model TOEFL scores. Even though there were slight differences even in the scores of the recruited students, generally, the higher grade students were selected to avoid possible problems resulting from low proficiency in reading and writing skills, which may have affected the nature of the study. The six

recruits were told the general steps of the study and a one-hour extra session was arranged every week. In the exam weeks, the study was postponed to the following week, which is why the six week reading and discussion session was completed in nine weeks.

Every Thursday at 4:30, the researcher and the sample group came together in a seminar hall. After having a friendly chat about their week, students were given the full text of the target item with the focus excerpts marked on them. The reason why the researcher provided them with the full text of the target work was to give them an opportunity to read or look at the rest of the text when writing reflective responses to the questions. They were not asked to read the rest of the text or other poems, nor were they given extra information about the genre, age, or characteristic features of the writers. Thus, inclusion of such information in the responses might be regarded as a sign of engagement in literature and a promotion in motivation to read without obligation, just for the sake of expansion of knowledge and literary awareness. After and while reading the texts, they engaged in discussions both in English and Turkish, without initiation by the researcher. To explain how the discussions developed, I want to give the Lessing session as an example. Students were given the following marked part:

“What she saw was a woman alone, that was true, but she had not felt alone. For instance, Mrs Parkers was always somewhere in the house. And she did not like being in the garden at all, because of the closeness there of the enemy—irritation, restlessness, emptiness, whatever it was, which keeping her hands occupied made less dangerous for some reason” (pp. 312-313)

After reading this part, the researcher waited for the students to give suggestions or comments. In most situations, they initiated the discussion, if not, the

researcher asked an ice-breaker question, such as “*what might be the enemy...the emptiness I mean ?*” The researcher avoided interfering with the discussion and did not express his opinions unless he was asked to do so. The length of these sessions ranged from 30 minutes to 90 minutes according to the length of the target text and the willingness of the students to carry on the discussion. At the end of the session, the researcher delivered the open-ended question set about the text to the students and reminded students they were not obliged to respond to all of them. They were advised to write responses in English but also reminded that they might use Turkish when they felt they could not express their ideas in English. They were told that there were no maximum or minimum word limits and they were free to bring the responses back at any time until the end of the semester, even though they were advised to bring them in the following session, which they did in five of the sessions. The one late response delivery was related to their exam week. In that case, the responses were brought two weeks after the session, during their interviews. The researcher did not provide any verbal or written feedback pertaining to their responses, he did not comment about the length or the content of the responses, in order to not spoil the dynamics of the process. The researcher collected 36 responses, the average length of which ranged from 500 to 2,000 words. In nearly all responses, except for one or two paragraphs in the first two responses, were written in English. To be sure about the meanings the students wanted to convey in the responses, the researcher arranged one to one sessions with the participants, reading the responses together and asking the meanings of any ambiguous parts, changing the structure and vocabulary if the meaning they wanted to transmit was not matching with the structure and wording. These changes were made together with the students for the clarity of the responses and data.

Data Analysis

The written responses were transferred into word documents for ease of processing. The parts of the reflective responses containing elements of involvement/engagement, personalizing, open-endedness and hypothesizing were identified and labelled according to the framework that was prepared in the light of the responses, interviews and the commonly accepted frameworks in the literature. The framework took its final shape after all the identifications and classifications of the response parts into categories in the framework were conducted. Thus, the formation of the final framework continued to change throughout the evaluation and analysis process. In the meantime, one instructor from the same departments responsible for the reading classes of the preparatory year read and was asked to identify and colour-code the responses according to the final version of the framework. Finally, the samples which were classified in the same category by that coder and the researcher were counted as examples or indicators of the given category. When the coders could not agree on whether a chunk should be included in a certain category or not, they tried to convince each other by giving their reasons to include it within a certain category. This process worked in most disagreements; however, in a very few cases, in which the coders could not justify their inclusion of a chunk into a certain category, a third coder's ideas were taken into consideration. Finally, disagreements considering the inclusion or exclusion of these chunks were settled by voting.

As for the interviews, the researcher transcribed the interviews in Turkish and translated them into English. A native English speaker working in the same department, living in Turkey for 15 years, who is fluent and proficient in Turkish, was asked to compare the transcriptions and the translation for any loss of meaning. After

she made the necessary corrections, the elements containing the key points about the participants' motivation and attitudes toward reflective writing and literature were identified by the researcher and the two other coder-lecturers.

To answer the first research question, the researcher made use of the elements indicating the general motivation and attitude of the participants toward the reflective writing process and the literature.

To answer the second research question, the researcher counted the number of elements that contained elements of the items in the framework in each response.

Conclusion

This chapter presented information about the research questions, setting, participants, instruments, the study line, and the data collection procedure. The data analysis procedure and the results will be dealt with in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This study was designed to explore students' engagement level in the reflective writing process and their perceptions of the process itself. The researcher has attempted to answer the following questions:

Research Questions

1. What are the participating English Language and Literature students' perceptions of the practice of reflective writing?
2. What is their demonstrated engagement level in the reflective writing process?

In the following sections, the researcher presents an analysis of students' reflective documents that were written during the 2010-2011 academic year. To do this, the researcher will discuss the nature of the utterances, the framework according to which the utterances were analyzed, and the levels of engagement displayed by the six students in the reflective writing process. Moreover, students' perceptions of the reflective writing process will be explored by using the results gathered through semi-structured interviews with the students.

What are the English Language and Literature students' perceptions of the practice of reflective writing?

The data for this part were collected through interviews with the six participants from the English Language and Literature Department of Cumhuriyet University in Sivas. The interview questions (see Appendix C) were categorized into

four main categories: (a) preconceptions about the process; (b) the effect of reflectivity on the participant; (c) positive and negative points of the process; and (d) participants' thoughts about literary forms. Even though none of the questions directly asked about the effect of the reflective writing process on the participants' motivation and interest levels, a fifth category (e) motivation, was also explored indirectly in the interviews, predominantly through responses to questions 3, 4 and 5.

Preconceptions About the Study

What were your initial fears and difficulties about writing responses?

When the participants were asked if they had any initial fears or negative expectations about writing responses, most of them honestly maintained that they were expecting a dull and stereotypical reading and writing activity, in which they would be expected to read the texts and to write a determined number of words before receiving feedback which they assumed would lack meaning and stress grammatical points.

Reasons behind such expectations were suggested in their interviews:

Student 6: At first, I thought that we were going to read some texts and ... you know these things generally follow similar lines. You read some texts and answer typical questions such as who is the writer, what do you think about the writer's style, such typical questions. Therefore, I thought it might be somehow boring. Giving the instructor what she gave to you in a minimized version, nothing more, for the sake of the grades.

Student 2: Fears, no. But some negative expectations, yes. I mean most of the lessons using response writing in the department demand the students to follow certain criteria in nearly all steps of the writing; we are not free even in the number of the words. So the writing turns into a useless errand for the students, who should retell the text in order to prove to the instructor that they have read it, and by this means the students can get a passing grade.

As seen, both participants were apprehensive about the general application of response writing in their departmental academic courses; therefore, they expressed nearly the same negative expectations from this study. In other words, the initial negativity towards this study seems to stem from the obligatory and repetitive nature of the frameworks of the expected responses in their departmental courses, according to which the students are driven to achieve their academic goals, turning writing into merely a pragmatic event.

Have you managed to change your negative expectations?

As a response to the second interview question, which might be seen as the complement of the first question, all interviewees mentioned more or less the same points as the countering factors against this negativity. The items they suggested can be grouped as the voluntary nature of the study, the variety in the range of texts, the advantages of conducting group discussions, the absence of linguistic feedback and risk of being graded, the non-grammatical emphasis and the opportunity to reveal personal ideas and creativity:

Student 5: The negative expectations gradually dispelled as I volunteered and continued and felt successful. I learnt many things about the texts in the discussion sessions. I mean if I had two or three ideas about the text we read that day, in the discussion session these ideas were multiplied by the number of the group members. It was more like a group work. We expressed our ideas and as a group we evaluated our ideas. If we managed to prove our ideas by using the evidence from the text and if other people also recognized those points, that was success. This solidarity among group members facilitated us to overcome this negativity.

Student 4: I used to think that the responses conveying personal ideas would get high grades, and the instructors would value creative responses more than the other summative responses. But ...but I got lower grades in those creative responses because of

some grammar mistakes. As the present study is free from these kinds of nightmares, I was not pushed away from it.

Student 3: I immediately volunteered for the study, because of the richness of the readings and free discussions. It was an opportunity to expand my literary knowledge; in the department we hardly pass the 17th century barrier (laughs). The study was an extra load on top of the department courses but I did feel comfortable. We might have spared more time to the discussion sessions but I should cook dinner on Thursdays (laughs).

It is clear that the participants were able to cope with their original negative expectations and engage in the process, thanks to certain positive extra features of the present activity and the avoidance of negative factors associated with the learners' other courses. Positive factors included such things as the wide literary coverage, the voluntary nature of the course, the opportunity to conduct discussions, and the emphasis on meaning. Negative factors that this experience avoided included the focus on grammatical feedback and the assigning of grades. These factors, as a whole, helped the participants to get over their negative preconceptions and become more engaged in the reflective writing process.

The Effect of Reflectivity on the Participants

Has writing responses influenced the way you THINK about life in general and literature in particular? How?

The responses to the third question of the interview received a wide range of answers, all of which directly state the positive contributions of the study to the participants' perspectives on life and literature. Some participants mentioned that they gained a higher level of awareness and analysis through the study. The inquisitive perspective and in-depth understanding they gained help them to grasp life and identify literary concepts more easily:

Student 6: Well, I have decided that I have to be inquisitive towards life while I construct an impression of the world, life I mean... Reflectivity can be very helpful in gaining an in-depth understanding about life. If not, we are less humans than robots. Yes, this period helped me to adopt this analytical and inquisitive manner towards nearly all the concepts within life. This might be seen as a positive alteration which the study helped us to gain, awareness about what is really happening.

In addition to this, some students maintained that the study helped them to attain an enlarged perspective toward life and literature. Through multifaceted texts and sessions focusing on these texts, they were able to create a correlation between different texts and events. One student pointed out that she started to feel like a writer creating a new dimension in literature, and another described the process as an autopsy which also adds something to the thing that is analyzed. Still others expressed their newfound understanding of literature in other ways:

Student 5: I certainly have a wider perspective now... So every time I see a metaphor I see it from a different angle. I also want to use it in my own writing and add another dimension on it. So I started to have similarities with the writers, and my writing might be regarded as a literary creation.

Student 3: We tried to explore the reasons lying beneath the actions of the characters, the symbols of the writer, possible alternative meanings of these symbols. The realism, ironies, metaphors in the texts. I guess we piecemealed the texts. But this is not all. In the autopsy you only find what is in the body. But here we add something to the texts. This expansion took place in the discussion and writing sessions.

Student 1: Through the study, I recognized that literature does not only consist of some written documents. Signs, phenomena, symbols, bodily expressions, clearly everything is related to literature. The lives of the writers, their mysterious lives. I think they are living in the literature. Literature is another dimension of life.

Turning to their changed perspectives on life, one of the participants mentioned that she created similitude with the characters in the texts and tried to solve their problems as if they were her own problems. As a result, she recognized some behavioral changes in her life. She described the awareness and changes as a discovery as the thinking process about the texts gradually enlarged to reveal *the self*. Another student expressed somewhat similar thoughts:

Student 4: Certainly. I put myself in the story as the daughter and tried to imagine myself in her situation. I also imagined myself in the Lessing story in the role of Susan. I tried to find ways to regain happiness, to regain peaceful mind. Life is like a panorama and these readings are a part of my panorama. The reading also had an effect on my behavioural change but most importantly the reading helped me to recognize the situation. I mean, see my exact place in the panorama. Perhaps it was like a discovery. I guess it was a self discovery.

Yet another participant stated that the process helped her to see literature as a possible career opportunity as she was convinced through the study that she can be successful in literature:

Student 2: Before enrolling in the programme, I was planning to learn English and become an English teacher, but after the course we had last year and this programme, I think that I started to think of a career based on literature. I started to believe that I can be successful in a profession related to literature.

As can be seen from the excerpts of the interviews with different participants, their answers show a strong parallelism with the reflective writing categories, such as awareness, analysis, synthesis, and self-regulation. The interviewees indirectly confirmed their adoption of the categories by mentioning them in their answers. Most of the answers focused on the improvement in the perception of literature and life, which contributes to their idea-creation process. The creation of new dimensions and

ideas has helped the participants to feel like real writers, which transforms the reflective responses into items having a literary value in the eyes of the participants.

Most of the students in this study agreed on the fact that they have become more inquisitive and alert through the discussions and response writing, which shows parallelism with and can be confirmed through the increased evidence of reflective writing according to the framework, particularly in awareness, analysis, and hypothesizing. The mentioned behavioral changes in the participants' lives through the analysis of the problems and following construction of personal similarities with the characters in the texts correlates with the self-regulation category in the framework. The changes in behaviors also require a discovery in both the texts and the participants' own lives, which the fourth participant identified as self discovery. However, another participant's excerpt clearly suggests that the things they unearthed from the texts are not only a discovery but also an addition to and alteration of the texts and of the participants' perspective of the texts. This might indicate the contribution of the study to the participants' idea creation process. All the participants attained a desirable change through the study as they felt they were successful even without receiving feedback or any grades, which will be discussed in the additional issues section.

In what ways do you think this process may have helped your English and literary knowledge?

Rather than being a separate question aiming at exploring a new insight, the fourth interview question has a more complementary nature. It might be seen as a follow up question asking for some details in terms of the effects of the study on the participants' literary knowledge. However, the fourth interview question also asks for

the effect of the study on their language proficiency. Some participants mentioned that they achieved lexical improvement and developed a writing style, which they found more beneficial than grammatical improvement:

Student 5: We learnt lots of new words and uses. We learnt something beyond the grammar. It was more about the writing style. We developed a writing style, an individual way of writing. This was more important than the vocabulary range and grammar use.

Some interviewees also mentioned that they have gained a step further in the recognition of the ideas in the texts, the exploration of the meaning not only in the literary works and discussions but also in their own writings. Additionally, they mentioned that this recognition helped them to construct alternative and more original ideas even though these ideas more or less resemble the ones explored in the discussion part:

Student 2: It is not plagiarism, I hope. But reading new texts helps us to see new structures, vocabulary, and accordingly helps to find out alternative ways of expressions. So anything related to English will be helpful, I think.

Student 1: This change in the ideas frequently occurred when we started discussing the texts. But the things that I wrote were mostly the same things which we talked about in the discussion session. However, the way that I express these ideas changed. I used my expressions.

Student 6: At first, until I got accustomed to the study, I was constructing simple ideas lacking creativity and in-depth analysis. However, the level of my responses, their power in terms of ideas has increased gradually. I was able to generate only a single idea in the beginning period of the study. However, even though I had only one question to work on, now I have many question marks in my mind. I evaluate one with the other; think about more alternatives and ... it is complex, really complex but satisfying because it is more, it has alternatives.

The other interviewees mentioned the opportunity of comparing their ideas with other participants' ideas. Through the study, they suggested, they were able to determine their level in English and Literature by taking the other participants as reference. Even though they do not have a fixed impression about their grammatical development through the study, they reckon that they certainly benefitted from the study:

Student 3: Through the study, I observed myself. You know, to find out where I am in terms of knowledge. I had the chance to compare myself with other participants. I analyzed my responses and other people's responses. Especially, in the discussion sessions I had the chance to determine my true level in English and Literature. I recognized the need to read more. I recognized that I may analyze the texts, I mean understand, this was motivating, encouraging.

Student 4: We did not directly focus on things such as grammar and vocabulary. I am sure I learnt things in terms of language use but I do not think that it is so significant. However, I certainly improved myself, my writing. For example, in my last responses, I could write more things in comparison with my previous responses, take the texts from many different points. I mean the way I recognize, analyze the texts, and write about those points improved.

According to the excerpts of the interviewees considering the effects of the reflective writing process on their English and literary knowledge, some participants did not think that there was a significant effect in terms of their grammatical competence. Some participants underlined the fact that they gained linguistic improvement; however, instead of giving details about linguistic development, they continued to explore the lexical and analytical development they experienced. They said that their analytical skills and their recognition of the significant points in the texts and discussions developed. Some participants mentioned they were able to construct a writing style on their own and they felt competent in the creation of new and original

ideas. One participant found the process beneficial in determining one's level in English and Literature.

As can be seen from nearly all the responses, the participants did not tend to see the process as particularly beneficial linguistically, although they said they were able to develop vocabulary knowledge through the study. The reasons for not evaluating the process as linguistically beneficial may be related to the fact that in their departmental courses, students are generally exposed to direct grammar instruction based on teaching certain linguistic forms with a special focus, but in this study students were expected to learn grammar indirectly without any direct teaching. Therefore, because of their familiarity with direct grammar instruction, students may not have felt that they were able to develop their linguistic knowledge.

Prominent Positive and Negative Points of the Process

What were the highlights of this study for you?

Most of the participants found that the voluntary feature of the study was among the most prominent positive points of the process. This feature gave the participants freedom to take part or drop anytime they wanted, thus they felt they owned the process as long as they continued, according to their freewill:

Student 4: The voluntary nature of the study. We were not obliged to write responses to all the questions. So we had the freedom to reply to the questions we thought logical. We could change the nature of the responses by choosing among the questions.

Student 1: The positive traits... first of all it is not obligatory, we were free to be a part of it and we had the right to drop anytime we wanted, but no one dropped the study. It enlarged my horizon, my thoughts.

Student 2: We had a certain set of questions in this study, but we have the freedom to respond them with our ideas. You set us free.

Our ideas. The important thing is not determination of the questions. It is the determination of the answers. Here, we were not trying to find what is correct or false according to you. We were trying to find out our ideas about the texts, symbols, works or ourselves.

When Student 2 was asked to give more details about how the present study helped him to explore new ideas, he again underlined the voluntary and free nature of the study as the key factor:

Student 2: I have the opportunity and the right to express my ideas without feeling anxiety, there were no moulds or limits to our ideas in the discussions and writings. I think this scheme must be done for all the literature lessons, for all the literature students. Or at least, we must have at least one lesson designed like our study.

One interviewee regarded the variety of the literary texts as one of the significant features of the process. Through this wide range of reading texts, the participants seem to appreciate and became aware of the real spectrum of literature:

Student 4: We read different kind of works from different writers. We do not read such things in our regular courses. This is a chance for me to recognize the range of the writers.

Most of the students focused on different positive sides of the writing feature, by suggesting that it helped them to solidify their ideas and turn them into permanent documents on which they could focus and through which they could get a more realistic grasp of their true ideas. They mentioned that through writing, they had the chance to analyze their own ideas as if they were analyzing a literary text:

Student 4: And writing about them was also another factor. While writing, we think about the texts more and it helps us to reach awareness. I recognized that writing makes my memory more retentive.

Student 3: Lastingness. I mean helping the ideas to be permanent. It becomes a document. Your ideas are more

permanent on paper. But by putting them on paper, we can remember them easily, we can read them later, return them to think more about them.

Student 6: If we only had had readings and discussions, these activities might have had a short term effect, only here and now. Through writing, I recognized that I can elaborate on the readings and I can put my ideas about these readings on paper. I think writing is a more advance stage of reading and I saw that we can also do it. Writing allowed me to internalize these ideas in my mind.

Student 5: When we were having discussions the pace was really fast and an idea which might be very interesting and productive might be forgotten after two or three sentences because of the pace of the discussion. However, in writing it is not like that. You record everything and you can focus on all of them if you think it is valuable, it is more productive.

However, some participants underlined the importance of discussion sessions as one of the key points in the process, as the discussions have a very important role in the expansion of the knowledge and ideas through being exposed to other participants' knowledge and ideas:

Student 3: The discussion, achieving, exploring something in the texts by discussing, being aware of the important points in the texts by discussing, and expanding the knowledge in discussion, because in the discussion you have the chance to see the texts from other people's point of views.

Student 2: In the discussion sessions, other friends were expressing their ideas and these were really beautiful things, I would not have found most ideas without them. We explored the texts and the writers, we explored new insights pertaining to ourselves; moreover, we explored our friends.

According to the excerpts of the participants' interviews, the most prominent points in the study might be regarded as the voluntary nature of the study and the freedom given to the participants in terms of both selecting among the possible response questions and length of the responses. Many participants see writing as one of

the significant points of the process, as the documentation and permanency of the ideas was made possible through their transcription on paper. Putting the ideas on paper helped the participants not only solidify the ideas but also internalize them. As the participants mentioned, only after writing the ideas, can they be revisited and evaluated, which is helpful for the participant to have an inward look.

Some participants also suggested that the discussion session of the process was also among the prominent points in the study. Discussions were helpful in the exploration of new ideas. In the discussion session, participants expressed their ideas and other participants were able to explore each others' ideas. Through these insights, they experienced an expansion in idea variety. In addition, one participant mentioned that they not only explored new ideas, they also explored their friends' true ideas and feelings.

Do you think there might have been some negative or unhelpful aspects? If yes, describe them.

When they were asked the negative or unhelpful aspects of the study, even though some participants had some suggestions in order to improve the structure of the present study, all participants agreed that the process was well designed and it had no negative effect on them. The reason why some students thought the study had no negative points was their control over the study, the voluntary and free participation feature of the study and the full participation of the participants in the process:

Student 5: No, I do not think there were. I mean we had the control over the study. So it is impossible for anyone to say it was detrimental. If it was detrimental people might have dropped it long ago. In a normal programme, grading pressures everyone, even the instructors, that is the weak side of a regular course. However, in this study we could use everything we thought and explored. I think there were no weak sides in it.

Student 3: Certainly not. I am sure if we continued for another nine weeks, we might all take part in it. You know there were many people who wanted to take part in it, and there are some people in the class who felt jealous of us because we were enrolled in this study. I think, we must integrate this study into the department.

Student 6: I really do not think that there might be the slightest negative effect stemming from the study. But, it might be longer than the present form, because it seems that the idea productivity of the study increased in parallel with the length of the study.

Some interviewees criticized the selection of some literary genres such as poems. But the source of the problem was not about the design of the process but about the personal taste of the students:

Student 4: I strongly think that the poems were ineffective. It is not related to the study. I do not like poetry, full of metaphors, symbols, hidden meaning. You recognize that everyone gets some other meaning from the text and all the ideas seem logical and correct. This is irritating, strange. But the study has been well designed. There were no inefficient or detrimental parts.

However, one of the interviewees mentioned an indirect negative effect stemming from the awareness she gained through the reflective process. She reported that the improvement in the awareness changed her perspective towards her life in general and academic courses in particular. She argued that the reflective process demonstrated the merits of an ideal learning process, thus her perspective of the present departmental courses deteriorated as they are not compatible with the reflectivity process. From the general perspective, the awareness she gained about literature and life resulted in a more realistic and critical vision of the world around her:

Student 6: Well, it might have been but not a personal or direct negative effect. It might be like that Just because we gained awareness of some truths and concepts through the readings,

discussions and writings, we might have a more realistic and thus a more negative attitude towards life in its real form. I might have an enlightened thus a bit negative perspective towards life because of the awareness we gained through readings, discussions and writings. But I do not regard this as a detrimental impact of the study on our individuality and mentality.

The sixth participant also added some pseudo-negative effects of the reflective process on his perspective towards the departmental courses:

Student 6: To tell the truth, the routine courses are already boring enough; however, following this study, they have become more and more boring and limited. This might be regarded as a negative effect on my personal perspective toward academic courses. After seeing what things might be done considering literature, the inventory and the target of the present academic courses seemed more limited and poor in creativity.

As can be seen from the responses of the interviewees, none of them classifies any effects of the reflective process as negative, even though all of them have some suggestions for the improvement of the process, such as the choice of the texts and the length of the study. Interestingly, two participants maintained that her perspective has changed through the process and she has become aware of the inadequacy of the departmental courses in comparison with the reflective process. She indicated that this might be a negative outcome of the study.

Which form of literature (play, poem, short story, and novel extract) appealed to you most? Why?

The last interview question was designed to find out whether there is a correlation between the responses of the participants considering the most appealing texts throughout the process and their ratings of engagements observed in their reflective responses. Another purpose of the last question was to find out what the underlying reasons might be that resulted in the categorization of the texts as

appealing. Through their answers to this question, it is possible to have a better insight into how strong the effect of reflective writing is and which literary texts might be more effective in application of reflectivity.

When the first participant was asked the last interview question, she answered that poems were the most appealing text type, which shows parallelism with her individual ratings in the given literary texts. Her reason for categorizing the work as appealing is the contribution of the texts to explore new ideas:

Student 1: I guess towards the poems I felt a special interest, especially Crane's poetry (the 2nd highest rating in her responses, 21). The excerpts of Lessing are also a source of inspiration to me (the highest rating in her responses, 27). What is really appealing to me was the description about the inner world of the main character. I could personalize myself in her role through which I could recognize myself better, see myself and explore my ideas.

The second participant also demonstrated some parallelism in his interview with the ratings in his reflective responses only for the poems by Basho. The poems he mentioned were among the reflective responses which received the highest engagement ratings. However, though the second participant has shown engagement levels above average in his responses to play excerpts (Pinter, 24) and to a short story (Lessing, 30), he did not mention these literary genres in the interview:

Student 2: Well, the poems by Basho (the third highest rating in student 2's responses, 23). The poems explaining all the things in the world, universe, with a single sentence. Explaining the creation, existence, with a simple phrase. It leaves us a place to think, I mean to add to his poetry. The Crane poetry is also worth to read and think on it (the highest rating in his responses, 39). It has great criticism about issues that many writers do not dare to speak about, such as creation, the existence of god, good and evil.

The third participant mentioned the poems of Crane (second highest rating in her responses, 56) and the short story of Lessing (the highest rating in her responses,

64) as the most appealing literary genres through the study, which indicates a notable parallelism with the ratings she received in the engagement framework:

Student 3: Crane's poetry is one of the most interesting ones. He is not describing the emotion. He just describes the environment, the scene. It is not reading the words. I mean, it is more like a painting. You put yourself in the scene and you find out your own emotions, feelings... The Lessing short story is also of great magnitude. I guess the mother sacrifices her life for the survival of other members. This is strange.

According to the answers of the fourth participant, the last two sessions were among the most appealing literary texts, namely, a play by Pinter (the second highest rating in his responses, 41) and a short story by Lessing (the highest rating in his responses, 46). If the rating table of the fourth participant is compared with his answer about the most appealing texts, it might be seen that they are compatible with the ratings, though he also demonstrated some level of engagement in poems by Crane (29) and a novel by Lawrence (46):

Student 4: To Room 19. The most appealing one was that one for me. The plot of the short story has a certain focus throughout the story and has certain steps in the organization. I read the rest of it after the course out of curiosity... I felt a similar interest towards Pinter's work, which is like a puzzle. How can it *not* raise interest for anyone?

The fifth participant only gave a single literary range and text, when asked the last interview question: the short stories of Lessing. According to her engagement ratings, her response might be confirmed, as in the Lessing response, the fifth participant demonstrated her highest engagement rating (103), nearly doubling the second highest response for the Pinter play (64). This sharp increase clearly shows the participant's keen interest in this literary genre or at least this particular work:

Student 5: Lessing described a character sharing my feelings. I think I had those feelings long before and I knew I had those feelings but this knowing was not a very conscious knowing. Lessing's descriptions about these desires and feelings helped me to put myself into context.

From this response, we can also say that reflecting helped Student 5 to attain a degree of self discovery. Moreover, from these same lines, the participants' personalization and following self-regulation can also be inferred.

The sixth participant replied to the last interview question with two categories: verse and prose:

Student 6: Well, I particularly like these two texts (referring to works of Pinter and Lessing); they are really extraordinary and unique in a sense. Susan's spiral movements, her changing behaviors, the extra ordinary dialogues in the play were giving the reader more than they expect; they were not just literature; they also forced me to get a hold of human psychology in some different situations. Psychology and philosophy, I plan to have these two into my life.

As can be seen from the excerpt of the sixth participant, the literary genres of play and short story were among the most appealing works for him in the study, which shows a notable correlation with his engagement ratings, 95 (1st) and 48 (2nd) respectively:

Student 6: I also like the Crane poetry. The poems, they motivated me to think more as a result arrive at different perceptions of the world and everything within it. I think Crane poems are attractive because of their ability to convey relatively complicated ideas within these special limits.

The response of the sixth student and his rating in the Crane sessions are all indicative of the participant's interest in poems. The student's interest in these works, both the prose and the verse, might stem from their richness in ideas and perspectives and power to convey these to the readers. The idea transition and creation effect of the

text on the participant might be one factor why the participant categorizes the text as appealing.

As can be seen from the responses of all the participants and their possible interpretations by the researcher, all the participants clearly expressed which literary texts they found interesting, and then backed up their assertions with plausible reasons. In most of the situations, the participants' answers to the question can be confirmed by their ratings in the framework. That is, when the engagement ratings of the literary work(s) they classified as appealing were compared with their rating tables, it was seen that the given work had also the highest rating in the framework in nearly all categories. This suggests the reliability of both the rating tables and their answers.

One important thing that emerged throughout the interpretation of the responses to the last interview question is that the participants classified the works as appealing when they experienced a change in their ideas and behaviors after reading the text. It can be said that a change in the perspective of the participants, a transition in their behavior, expansion in the participants' ideas or creation of the new ideas might be the prerequisites, which might contribute to the academic and personal life of the participants, for them to find the work as appealing, thus motivating the participants to read, explore and write more.

Another important point is the distribution of the literary items that were labeled as the most appealing. The most frequently mentioned literary genres are poems (particularly the poems by Crane), plays (by Pinter) and short stories (by Lessing). When the chronological order of the responses is taken into account, it can be seen that these responses are the last three responses of the process. This might indicate that one reason why the last three genres were identified as the most appealing

genres and the highest ratings were attained in these responses can be related to the participants' improved practice through the second half of the process. The first three responses might have given the participants the required time, practice and motivation which might have helped them to engage more and explore more, thus classifying the genres more appealing.

One more point of the frequent selection of these three genres--poems, plays and short stories--as most appealing, might be related to the actual size of the text and reading load. Even though the reading and discussion sessions were limited to some excerpts of the given works, the participants received the whole texts of the target works. The shorter texts might have allowed them to grasp a clearer picture in comparison with the longer texts, such as novels. Thus, the participants might have seen reading the whole texts as a possible and viable option, which may have resulted in an expansion in idea recognition and creation, exploration and engagement. The increase in these features might also have increased the participants' interest in the given texts.

Motivation

The interview questions do not have a direct question targeting the motivational effect of the reflective process on the participants. However, interview questions 3,4 and 5 might have some implications for the motivation issue, and some sub-questions emerged naturally throughout the interview, such as "If we integrate such a process into your curriculum, would you follow it for the whole term, or two terms?", might help to reveal the study's possible motivational effect. The main reason why the researcher did not ask a direct question considering the motivation to the participants is the need for avoiding a pseudo-positive answer given for the sake of cooperating with

the researcher. In some cases, the participants felt discontented about giving a negative answer to someone with whom they have gone through a process. In the context, the researcher was one of the lecturers of the participants in their prep year and they had conducted a nine-week programme together. These two factors might have prevented the participants from conveying their negative attitudes directly. For these reasons, even though the clarity of the answers might decrease, the researcher has opted to ask about the motivational issue indirectly.

Some students mentioned that the general expectations of the writing courses and other courses involving writing limited their reflections of individuality. This limitation is one of the reasons resulting in a decrease in their motivation. However, the unlimited range and welcoming nature of the personal ideas helped the participants feel motivated and carry on the process in a more content manner:

Student 4: In the department, they give us a story, we read it in the class and in the exams they want us to write the summary of the story. All we write is summaries. Interestingly, I got used to writing summaries so much that I again started to write summaries in your reflective responses. And when I recognized that, I felt very discouraged and disappointed as those writings are not mine. However, finding the opportunity to convey my personal ideas freely without feeling the anxiety of getting a low grade was the thing that pushed me forward.

Student 2: I see interesting details, I am sure that I am the only one seeing these details, but I cannot write them. Because...the these were not what the instructor expected us to write. You should write what you are expected to write. This is not the case in the reflectivity. The free range of the writings allowed me to write more.

Student 3: Here, the free and non-grading nature of the responses made things easier for the students. I guess, if the students are freed from the course specifications, this might end up with more productive writers. However, for the courses in our department, I made a research about the plays and wrote a response and I got 80. Then, I felt motivated and prepared a better, longer response with my own ideas but I got 30 from it. So I only try to fulfill the

requirements. 500 words maximum, description of the theme, information about the writer by using the wordlists.

As can be seen from the students' excerpts, the strict specifications of the writing activities in the departmental courses de-motivates the participants from engaging fully in writing activities. However, as they mentioned, the more the range of the activities are enlarged and the more they are left free, the more they feel motivated to engage in writing activities.

Most of the students said that the absence of grammatical feedback and grades was another factor that motivated them to engage in this process. In their interviews, they could not help but compare the reflectivity process with other courses in the department, even though they were not asked to do so. First, they expressed the negative issues such as the nature of the grammatical feedback and grading that reduced their motivation levels and then they expressed how the absence of these factors helped them to feel motivated:

Student 4: The fact that we continued the programme meant we were successful. Each new text and each new response showed that we did it well in the previous ones. The motivation to carry on stemmed from this safe setting, unlike the way it happens in the department. If you had given grades, it would have been a detrimental thing. If I had received low grades, I might have dropped the course. I would follow each course as long as I do not get grades.

Student 1: In regular lessons, we have anxiety about getting a low grade if we do not study for the examinations of that course. This anxiety sometimes prevents people from integrating themselves into the course. Because of this anxiety, many people cannot be successful even though they have the capacity to be successful. This study was voluntary and all is related to your understanding of the text, your criticism and your evaluation. I write what I understand from the readings. Is that so?

Student 2: If you had given feedback about grammar, vocabulary and especially about the ideas, perhaps we would not have thought that freely. We surely had limited ourselves by saying

that I did this criticism in my previous writing and the teacher said that this criticism was wrong. This might have resulted in a limitation in the writings. If you had underlined somewhere in my response, this might have been discouraging. I am not so sure but this is what it seems.

Student 1: Underlining the mistakes, errors. Writing “this is not correct”, “change this word”, “study grammar”, asking “where did you get this idea?”, “read more, this is not the correct idea”. These are feedback. These limit me in my writing. I feel anxious, and writing 500 words becomes a very tiring process. We have hundreds of ideas in our minds when we are reading and discussing, studying, but because of the anxiety over the teacher’s feedback we get rid of the unusual and extreme ideas and limit these ideas. If someone had given me such feedback, this would have limited my responses.

Student 5: Well, in the department, I had very high grades from the responses I wrote, but this did not satisfy me. I felt no pleasure of success. I did not feel successful and did not write the last four responses of that lesson. The last four responses of the video lesson. Because I had nothing to write, we just watched the movies and plays and the instructor wanted us to write minimum 500 words for each play.

Student 5: In response writings, in literature, I do not think that anyone can be so certain about anything. So grading is futile, it does not have a firm base, but it acts as if it has. Then people start to think, but under pressure. Pressure of being graded, classified under right or wrong. Trying to write something creative or reflective by keeping in mind that your response will be graded is not one of the enjoyable things that I desire to do. But in the study, we found our points and expressed our points and this was improvement for me. We acted freely. Knowing that none of the things we write would be wrong, we acted within a much wider scope. But if you had included a grading system, you would not possibly have had so many different perspectives. Summaries. All summaries.

Student 6: In fact, these grades do not have any certain set of criteria, and I think there should not be any criteria for such tasks. Because, that is, I am against the grading mechanism in that grading might only be valid in a teaching learning system based on mere memorization. That is, it is just for the control of the knowledge. This is interesting. The lecturer does expect commentary, criticism from us, but she gives us grades. This is contradictive. I am really happy that the reflectivity process did

not have such a feature. Otherwise, I could not make it till the end.

As can be seen from the excerpts of the interviews, most of the participants criticized the grading and grammatical feedback, which are integral parts of the departmental courses. The criticism focused on the limiting effect of the grading mechanism as the personal ideas which are new to the lecturer are not classified as acceptable. This may result in a decline in the learners' grade as they express more personal and creative points about the target texts. The feedback they get is another demotivating point they mentioned. The grammatical feedback prevents them from presenting integration in writing and other activities related to writing. The absence of such factors might play a role in the increase in the overall engagement and motivation of the participants into reading and writing activities.

Analysis of Engagement Levels

The items in the framework were selected by the researcher from existing related frameworks, in order to bring together categories that would be helpful in coding the indicators of engagement in reflective writing (Elbow, 2002; Flower, 1994; Graves, 1983; Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Kaufer, David; Hayes, John; Flower, 1986; Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992). Then, the enlisted items were published through the means of an online data-base organizer, called Prezi. On this online programme, the users are given an unlimited surface on which the users add anything from pictures to documents or texts. The researcher made use of Prezi as a place to receive ideas and suggestions from other teachers around Turkey and the world by means of e-mailing the URL of the platform and the password, and inviting them to make alterations. Over 50 instructors were requested to examine the proposed framework and to make any

omissions or additions to the item-list if necessary. Finally, the suggestions of the second coder considering the items in the framework were also taken into account to give the list its final shape. After determining the categories and shaping the framework, the researcher conducted an initial coding of the students' writings.

Students' reflections were also analyzed by another coder to ensure the reliability of the tool. Before the second coder began coding, she was informed about the nature of reflective writing and about the labels in the framework, including clarifications and exemplifications of the main and sub-categories.

After the second coder finished coding, the researcher and the second coder discussed their individual results to determine how well the framework had worked. After this negotiation process, it was found that some utterances were difficult to put in a particular category, that is, there appeared to be overlapping points in categorization. Upon this, the problematic categories (C1 Awareness and C2 Analysis) were reevaluated and the researcher and the second coder created clearer descriptions for these categories. Following this, the problematic parts in the students' responses were coded again, using the updated framework.

Finally, when the researcher and the second coder had completed the coding process separately, the inter-coding reliability was calculated. The percentage of the total number of units for which the coders agreed was found to be 98%. This indicates that there is much consistency between the researcher's and the second coder's coding, showing that the framework in this study was a reliable tool to be used to assess learners' engagement level in reflective writing. In the next part, the framework will be described in detail.

Coding the Responses

In the following part, the framework that was used for the final analysis will be described. Table 1 shows all the categories and their descriptions.

Table 1: The Reflective Writing Evaluation Framework

Categories	Reflective Writing (RW) indicator	Subcategories	Definition and Sub-categories
C1	Awareness	SC10 Textual awareness	Demonstrating careful, detailed observation of the complexities of the events and situations and being aware of the emotional dimensions of events and situations.
		SC11 – self awareness	Exploring ideas that the participants were not aware of prior to the readings and discussions and writing.
C2	Analysis	SC20 - textual analysis	Using specific and convincing examples from the texts studied to support claims in their own responses. Trying to reach to the reasons behind the events, actions in the texts by means of trying to answer the questions “Why?” and “So what?”. Demonstrating growth in knowledge construction by means of using prior knowledge to explore the new texts and making improvements in the previous knowledge by means of the explorations made in the new responses.
		SC21 – self analysis	Revisiting one's previous ideas, making alterations in them, improvement in the ideas. Finding the reasons behind one’s own actions.
C3	Synthesis	SC30 – Bridging the events in the text/s	Making connections between events and situations in the same text. Making connections between different events and situations and between specific details and general principles derived from the text and discussions.
		SC31 – Reaching to a meaningful whole	Linking different concepts to bring a solution to the dilemmas in the writing and in the responding participant's life.
C4	Hypothesizing	SC40 – leading to new perspectives	Leading to new perspectives and insights on the reader, provoking the reader to think. Leading to the exploration of new issues in the texts and the personal experiences of the participants. Reaching at different ideas in different stages of the study.
		SC41 – contributing to	New points of view, expressing new opinions, justifying and giving reasons for these opinions, new insightful claims and assertions.

		the texts by means of assumptions	Contribute to the texts by means of assumptions, thus bridging the gap between what the writer of the text left unwritten.
C5	Self Regulation	SC50—Using learning strategies for independent and effective learning	Using of cognitive, meta-cognitive and self-regulatory strategies to monitor and guide the reading and writing processes. Not only simple or “surface” processing strategies such as rehearsal but also “deeper” processing strategies such as elaboration.
		SC51 – Applying analytical skills to offer suggestions & alternative solutions	Bringing the conflicts, in which the protagonists of the texts are intertwined, to meaningful conclusions alternative to the ones presented in the texts.
C6	Personalization	SC60 -- From the writer of the responses to the reader of the responses	Evidence of personal response to the issues raised in the readings and the discussion, ranging from the text proceeding towards a personal then a universal perspective and more abstract aspects of life. Showing an understanding of the material and incorporating or internalizing it in one’s life. Empathizing with the standpoint of other people, the characters in the texts or the writer of the texts.
		SC61 – The response writer without a mask	Using descriptive language, authoritative and notable voice and persona, being brave in one’s expressions. Clearly and boldly expressing arguments, opinions. Strong expressions of feelings and emotions, natural and honest expressions.
C7	Involvement	SC70 – Willingness to further study	Showing visible delight, willingness, need, desire and compulsion to take part in, and be successful in, the reading/writing process. Showing sustained behavioral involvement and genuine effort in reading, writing and reflective practice by a positive emotional tone including enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest despite challenges and obstacles in the texts (not only in the texts but also in the personal schedule of the reader/writer).
		SC71 – Active involvement in the reflective process	Making active responses to the learning tasks presented (e.g., active student response to an instructional antecedent, such as asking relevant questions, solving task-related problems, and participating in relevant discussions with teachers/peers)
		SC72 – Doing more than demanded	Open ended writings, expanding the writing beyond the question, writing more than demanded with originality and extra initiative. Clearly revealing that the reader searched for and read more from the story or more from the writers of the target texts. The desire to know more about particular topics, and feelings of stimulation or excitement in reading new texts.
C8	Not reflective Writing	SC80 – False Reflection	Repeating information without adding anything new. Without bringing new dimensions or alternatives to the conflicts, or taking an honest personal stance, just agreeing or disagreeing with the ideas in the texts Ambiguous, confused, irrelevant expressions.

Awareness (C1)

The first category in the framework was *Awareness (C1)*, which stands for the familiarity of the participant with the topics at hand, and the exploration of new ideas through the writing process. Many researchers focusing on the writing and engagement levels of students (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Clandinin & Kennard, 1993; Elbow, 1973, 1998, 2002; Faigley, 1986; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Graves, 1983, 1978; Lee, 2007; Moffett, 1982; Murray, 1969, 2004; Parson, 1985; Rohman, 1965) have suggested that awareness is among the primary indicators of engagement. The category has two subcategories, namely *textual* and *self analysis*. This category with these two subcategories was used to code the responses in which students made a careful and detailed observation of the complexities of the events and situations and demonstrated awareness of the emotional dimensions of events and situations. Moreover, this category helped to code the responses in which students explored ideas that the participants were not aware of prior to the readings and discussions and writing. Some examples from the participants' responses related to Crane's poems for this category are shown below:

“In his poems, the world is not controlled. The world is irregular. You cannot guess the future. The ship metaphor is well designed. Ok. Someone built the ship but this person (God) is not controlling the ship. The creator is not the controller. Actually, no one controls the ship.” (SC10 Textual Awareness)

“Crane cannot see, understand himself, his love, hate, desire ... in the darkness. In the darkness everything is same. Darkness is quiet. He does nothing in the darkness. He is not responsible for anything, because he sees nothing. ... This is human, this is our nature; full of shame.” (SC11 Self Awareness)

The utterances that were not followed by a comment were not counted in this category because without a comment or expansion, the references would only be the description and repetition of the event.

Analysis (C2)

The second category in the framework was *Analysis (C2)*. There are many researchers suggesting that analysis is one of the fundamental components of reflective process (Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Elbow, 2002; Gibbs, 1988; Good & Whang, 2002; Kolb, 1984; Merriam, 1999; Moon, 1999; Murray, 2002). The category had two subcategories, *textual and self analysis*. The first subcategory, *Textual Analysis (SC20)*, was used to code the utterances in which students extracted specific and convincing examples from the texts studied to support claims in their own responses, explored the reasons behind the events or actions in the texts, and demonstrated growth in knowledge construction by means of using prior knowledge to explore the new texts.

The second subcategory, *Self Analysis (SC21)*, allowed for the coding of examples of participants revisiting their previous ideas, altering and improving those ideas, and making efforts to reach at an in-depth understanding of the concepts in the texts. In the extracts about Pinter's play below, one example for each subcategory is shown:

“For example, Ramsey said I felt the grass moving beneath my feet... Here, Pinter makes human a stable object, a frozen object. Pinter puts the grass and objects in the nature at the first place and human at the second place. Human is not the centre of the universe anymore.” (SC20 Textual Analysis)

“Ramsey can rectify our perception of world; I mean his perspective shows our real life. We are in that crowd but we don't belong to it. In fact, we are alone in that crowd; this is just a

crowd for us. People are like a single thing. We are not important as individuals.” (SC21 Self Analysis)

Synthesis (C3)

The third category in the framework was *Synthesis (C3)*, which is about combining different ideas in texts. Research has placed importance on synthesis in the evaluation of language quality both in written and spoken form (Amiran & Mann, 1982; Boud, 1985; Flower, 1994; Graves, 1996; Kaufer, Hayes, Flower, 1986; Krathwohl, Bloom, & Masia, 1964; Murray & Kujundzic, 2005; Richards, 1998; Woodfield, 1998). This category has two subcategories, namely, *Bridging the events in the text/s* and *Reaching a meaningful whole*. The first subcategory was used to code the responses in which students made connections between events and situations in the same and in different texts. With the help of the second subcategory, students’ responses in which they linked different concepts to offer solutions to dilemmas expressed both in the writing and in the participant's life could be analyzed and coded. Below are two examples for these subcategories about Crane’s poems:

“They think they are free. But this is not freedom. This is like Greek mythology. God is always angry, enjoys people’s pain and suffering. This is a Greek God, good at the beginning, but angry later. Crane’s God gives punishment. But people think this is freedom.” (SC30 Bridging the Events in the Texts)

“It is like Kafka, the metamorphosis ... Lessing’s character has more honour than Kafka’s character. She has the courage to kill herself. It is not just a reaction to Mathew, kids, the devil, to God, but a solution for the vicious circle... This shows she is strong, honest like the tragic heroes of Shakespeare.” (SC31 Reaching to a Meaningful Whole)

Hypothesizing (C4)

Hypothesizing (C4) was the fourth category in the framework. It refers to the creation of new insights by the participants, stimulating them to widen their

perspectives to include new dimensions of the texts, and being able to reformulate or reconsider the existing ideas throughout the evolution of the process. A good deal of research has tried to reveal the correlation between hypothesizing and engagement levels (Daloglu, 2001; Elbow, 2002; Freire, 1974; Meece et al., 1988; Osborne, 2001; Radford & Others, 1995; Straub, 2000; Tobias & Everson, 1996; Tsang, 1996; Ward & Traweek, 1993; Xiaochun, 2007; Zimmerman & Schunk, 1994). *Leading to new perspectives* and *Contributing to the texts by means of assumptions* are the subcategories of this category. Below are the examples for these subcategories from responses about Lessing's short story:

“Contrary to my previous belief, the concept of family destroys the individual in Lessing's story. Lessing shows that marriage has logic, not emotions. This logic comes from man ... He is presented as the devil progressively throughout the story. The story is like the war between men and women.”(SC40 *Leading to New Perspectives*)

“Mathew cheated on Susan in the story, I guess Susan tried to understand him, she did not forgive him ... It means he is not guilty. It is clear that Lessing is trying to say that you forgive what you do not understand.” (SC41 *Contributing to the Texts by means of Assumptions*)

Self Regulation (C5)

Self regulation (C5) was the fifth category in the framework. Research has demonstrated that self regulation is one of the vital indicators of engagement in the reflective writing process (Capra, 1996; Cumming et al., 1989; Elbow, 2002; Greenwood et al., 1994; Luhmann, 1995; Mingers, 1994; Pintrich & Groot, 1990; Pintrich & Schrauben, 1992; Schön, 1987). This category had two subcategories. The first subcategory, *Using learning strategies for an independent and effective learning*, was used to label the responses which indicated students' use of cognitive, meta-cognitive and self-regulatory strategies to monitor and guide the reading and writing

processes. The second subcategory, “*Applying analytical skills to offer suggestions and alternative solutions*,” helped to code the responses in which students brought the conflicts to meaningful conclusions alternative to the ones presented in the texts. The two examples of these two subcategories are shown below from the responses about Basho’s poems:

“At first, I thought that the irregularity of the universe was the punishment. However, it is not that straightforward. The universe needs no other punishments. This unfinished creation is the real punishment.” (SC50 Using learning strategies for independent and effective learning)

“The world is like a blank paper in Basho’s winter, letting him to put conflicts on that paper and analyze them willingly, consciously, more like reflection ... thinking about life. I think Susan should meet Basho, or read Basho ... She might find herself on Basho’s pure blank paper ... She will certainly find more on this page than in the Room 19. This is strange. But I feel that way.” (SC51 Applying analytical skills to offer suggestions & alternative solutions)

Personalization (C6)

The sixth category in the framework was *Personalization (C6)*, which evaluates the level of personal and genuine inclusion of the participants into their writings. This category also tries to assess how much the participants reveal their real ideas without hiding behind clichés or some stereotypical idea webs (Auerbach, 1992; Clandinin & Kennard, 1993; Daloglu, 2001; Good & Whang, 2002; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Natriello, 1984; Raimés, 2000; Richards, 1998; Skinner & Belmont, 1993). This category had two subcategories, namely, *From the writer to the reader (SC60)* and *The writer without a mask (SC61)*. The first subcategory was used to code the responses in which students showed evidence of personal response to the issues raised in the readings and the discussion, an understanding of the material and

incorporating or internalizing it in one's life and empathy toward the standpoint of other people, the characters in the texts or the writer of the text.

As for the second category, it allowed for coding responses in which students used descriptive language, authoritative and notable voice and persona, being brave in their expressions, making strong expressions of feelings and emotions and using natural and honest expressions. The two examples of these two subcategories are shown below from the responses about Pinter's play and Lessing's short story:

“This is again a monologue like the ones we read in *Godot*. He is like sinking into the sea and coming to the surface but we do not know what happened below the sea surface. This is normal human. I am not sure what I did one hour ago. I thought I did something; however, can I be sure?” (SC60 From the writer to the reader)

“At night, all the things become stable, no change. Human is alone with himself. Our thoughts talk to us, we talk to ourselves. We cannot know this sound is real or not. Or can we be in total silence? ... Ellen says she must find someone. But she knows that there is no one.” (SC61 The writer without a mask)

Involvement (C7)

The seventh category which is an indicator of engagement in reflective writing was *Involvement (C7)*. Because of the vagueness in the distinction between the terms *involvement* and *engagement*, many researchers used these terms interchangeably in the evaluation of the interest of the students in the learning process (Aarnoutse & Schellings, 2003; Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001; Bilton & Sivasubramaniam, 2009; Carruthers, 1997; Elbow, 1998; Fisher et al., 1980; Guthrie & Wigfield, 2000; Hall, 2005; Hardison, 1999; Holt-Reynolds, 1991; Jewell, 2008; Mathewson, 1994; McIntyre et al., 1983; Miller et al., 1996; Schiefele, 1991). This category, with three subcategories, tries to capture the degree of involvement that the participant presents throughout the reading, discussion and response writing process. It focuses more on

the quality of the responses rather than their quantity. This quality is not only presented by the originality of the responses, but also the degree of willingness to continue the process, the open-endedness of the answers leading to new questions, and the deepness in the responses. The first subcategory, *Willingness to further study* (SC70), was used to categorize the responses in which students showed sustained behavioural involvement and genuine effort in reading, writing and reflective practice through the expression of a positive emotional tone, e.g. enthusiasm, optimism, curiosity, and interest, despite challenges and obstacles in the texts. The second subcategory, *Active involvement in the reflective writing process* (SC71), helped to analyze the responses in which students made active responses to the learning tasks presented by asking relevant questions, solving task-related problems, and participating in relevant discussions with teachers/peers. The last subcategory, *Doing more than demanded* (SC72), was used to label the responses which signified students' expansions of the writing beyond the question, with originality and extra initiative. Below are some examples of this category from the responses about Kincaid's short story and Lessing's short story:

“This must be related to Kincaid's personal life. I have read a book of her, a semi-autobiography... In one line she combines Pinter, Lessing, Crane, Basho. Read this: “... the light went through each thing, so that nothing could be hidden. I live in silence. The silence is without boundaries ... I am no longer “I”. Living in the silent voice I'm at last at peace. Living in the silent voice I am at last erased.”

I cannot say more. This is the final sentence. It shakes all our ideas and thoughts.” (SC71 Willingness to further study)

“This feeling destroyed her. I sometimes feel this pressure. As if everything pressing on me and I go to a swimming pool. In the water nothing touches you. You do not feel pressure. You do not feel anything. It is similar to flying ... However, for Susan I guess

this was the best choice.” (SC71 Active involvement in the reflective process)

“It is a monologue. I really wondered the rest of it, because I want to learn the end of this conflict. But I should admit that my conclusions are pretty vague. I think there are more things in it to learn and we need to discuss it.” (SC72 Doing more than demanded)

Not Reflective Writing (C8)

The final category in the framework was “Not reflective writing” (C8). It had only one subcategory “False reflection”. This category was used to code responses which did not go beyond being mere repetitions and meta-phrases of the texts. Responses which failed to bring in new dimensions, offer alternative solutions to the central conflicts, or which lacked a clear strong voice and personal attitude, or which consisted of only agreement or disagreement without any insights, were classified under this category. An example can be seen in the following excerpt:

“Crane used the symbol of desert in this poem. The character is put in a desert and the man does not want to stay in the desert but a voice says ‘it is not a desert’. This voice tries to convince the man about staying there.” (SC80 False Reflection)

By means of the framework, the raters evaluated the reflective responses of each participant. They color-coded the chunks, sentences and phrases including indications of each category. Only when the same chunk was coded for a given category by both raters, was that chunk counted as an indicator of that category. The number of examples in any given category was added to reach a cumulative score signifying the total number of examples for each category. In the next section, the evaluation of the responses, which deals with the first research question of the study, will be given. The notable findings from the data will be drawn from the ratings and some samples will be

given in order to help the reader evaluate the quality and reliability of both the responses and the ratings by the researcher and co-coders.

Students' demonstrated engagement level in the reflective writing process

The researcher and the second coder agreed on 1,119 units of analysis in the seven categories indicating students' engagement levels in reflective writing. A third coder's decisions were called for when the researcher and the first coders disagreed on a particular chunk and its inclusion in a certain category. The few disagreements were settled by voting by the researcher and two coders. The researcher also analyzed the amount and the distribution of the categories which aimed to measure students' engagement levels in reflective writing.

Table 2: The total number of the categories for each response

		R.1	R.2	R.3	R.4	R.5	R.6	Total
		Kincaid	Lawrence	Basho	Crane	Pinter	Lessing	
Total Number of All Participants	<i>Word count</i>	<i>1,039</i>	<i>939</i>	<i>1,233</i>	<i>2,982</i>	<i>3,217</i>	<i>4,097</i>	<i>13,507</i>
	<i>Category</i>							
	Awareness (C1)	17	28	30	48	73	84	280
	Analysis (C2)	12	15	20	58	60	79	235
	Synthesis (C3)	10	3	18	40	29	34	136
	Hypothesizing (C4)	11	5	19	40	43	39	157
	Self Regulation (C5)	2	1	5	6	9	10	32
	Personalization (C6)	16	13	22	44	53	54	202
	Involvement (C7)	7	8	9	14	21	17	76
	Total	75	73	123	250	288	317	1,119

R=Response

As seen in Table 2, out of seven categories, C1 (Awareness) seems to have the highest percentage (24.9%), followed by C2 (Analysis) and C6 (Personalization). This finding suggests that students' engagement in the reflective writing process is primarily indicated by these indicators, perhaps because these categories are the most

easily activated in terms of time and effort. Table 2 also shows that C1, C2, and C6, which are the highest categories in the scale, are followed by C4 (Hypothesizing), C3 (Synthesis), C7 (Involvement), and C5 (Self-regulation). As can be seen from Table 2, the categories of Awareness, Analysis, and Personalization reached high total numbers in total. While the categories of Synthesis and Hypothesizing reached high incidence, though not as high as C1, C2 and C6, the other categories of Self Regulation and Involvement had relatively lower counts.

The pattern of counts for analysis (235), synthesis (136) and hypothesizing (157) might be considered an unexpected irregularity for some researchers (Arthur, 1998; Blum, 1955; Maturana & Varela, 1980; Barton & Haslett, 2007). The categories of analysis, synthesis and hypothesizing are presented as successive and complementary pattern by Arthur (1998). For him, through the knowledge development process, there is a systematic dialectic, primarily between analysis and synthesis, that is, one category gives rise to the other. This orderly relation can also be seen in Blum's (1955) description considering the reflective approach in any problem solving situation. He identifies two steps in this process. In the first step, which he calls the diagnostic step, the problem is analyzed and by different combinations of the features of the given problem, which we may call synthesis, hypotheses are advanced. In the second step, which he calls the therapeutic step, the hypotheses are put to practice in social context, accounting for the self-regulation category in the present study. Maturana and Varela (1980) also suggested a correlation between these categories by labeling them hybrid qualities. This hybrid feature was also mentioned by Barton & Haslett (2007) as they labeled the features of analysis, synthesis and

hypothesizing as hierarchical and correlative in their study focusing on the relationship between them.

Additionally, the categories of Involvement (76) and Self Regulation (32), have the lowest number of examples in the rating. This finding might mean that these are the most difficult categories to present reflection in. Another reason for the low number of examples in these categories might be the length of the present study. Unlike the preceding categories, these two categories might require a substantially longer time to activate or promote.

Although the percentages of the seven categories give an idea of the overall level of students' reflectivity, it is important to evaluate each category separately to see if there is a difference in the ratings of the six responses within each one and to see if there is a possible gradual increase over time. As can be seen in Table 2, out of 1,119 responses, students had the highest rating in Response 6 (28.3%) and the lowest rating in Response 1 (6.7%). The numeric gap between the first and the last responses suggests that the participants were not accustomed to writing reflective responses at first—possibly because reflectivity is not often among the skills which are required from them in their academic activities--but over time, they got used to writing reflective responses. Moreover, as seen from Table 2, there is a linear increase in the ratings of students' responses, supporting the view that students seem to get used to the procedures gradually.

For all the categories targeting at evaluating general engagement levels of the participants Awareness, Analysis, Synthesis, Hypothesizing, Self Regulation, Personalization and Involvement, there is a clear increase. This increase shows parallelism with the word counts of the responses (Although word count of the

responses is not being used in this study to actually measure the participants' engagement levels). The categories of awareness, analysis and hypothesizing, which started at low levels, all demonstrated steady increases in comparison with others. They are also the highest ones when the total ratings are taken into consideration, which means this trend remained steady throughout the nine week reading-discussion and writing process. This may indicate that these three categories are the ones in which the participants feel more engaged in the writing process. Interestingly, the third category, synthesis, which is regarded as the way-station between analysis and hypothesizing by the some researchers (Arthur, 1998; Barton & Haslett, 2007; Blum, 1955; Maturana & Varela, 1980), does not show the same upward trend as analysis and hypothesizing. According to the studies cited above, it might be expected that this category should also demonstrate a similar increase as the others; however, the rating per response and the overall rating of this category is well below the average rating of the two other related categories of analysis and hypothesizing. The interesting point here is that the participants jumped to the hypothesizing category without reaching what might be considered an adequate level in the synthesizing category. This may indicate that either the participants did not see synthesizing as important for the idea creation and reflection process, or that they were not aware of the importance of this category for the growth of the other categories.

Whether it is related to the idea creation and reflection process they adopted by means of the regular educational activities they are exposed to, the fluctuation in the number of the categories of analysis, synthesis and hypothesizing might indicate an important gap in the steps of idea creation and reflection, which might give rise to overestimated and unsupported ideas in the responses and may direct the participants

to jump to immature conclusions. This gap in the process surely will lessen the maturity of the responses and prevent the participants from building and re-building a healthy structure on previously constructed ideas. In the interview part of this study, one participant reported some gaps in his reading and writing courses. The gaps he mentioned were mainly focused on the interaction between the reading and writing activities. In their regular writing activities they were generally exposed to texts and model essays; however, they were expected to provide their ideas and write essays without thinking or rethinking about them, or participating in a discussion session first. This lack in the order of the idea-creation route might explain this downward trend in this category despite the upward trend in the hypothesizing.

As for the category of personalization, it might be seen as higher in comparison with self regulation and involvement, although it might be seen lower in comparison with awareness, analysis, hypothesizing. The rise in examples of personalization might indicate that the participants did take a personal stand in the process and saw the study as a means to express their own ideas.

Even though the first three responses were low in the involvement category, the last three responses saw an increase, which might result from the fact that the reading load and effort required in the last three texts were less than for the first three texts or that they needed more time and practice for activation of these skills.

Some categories demonstrated more than a fourfold increase and some others demonstrated more than a twofold increase; however, all participants demonstrated clear increases in each response through the development of the reflective writing process. The total number of examples in the first response (75), which includes the number of examples for all the categories of all participants, showed a steady upward

trend, reaching 317 examples in the sixth response. This consistent upward trend might indicate that the reflective writing process is effective in increasing engagement in literature and writing.

Conclusion

This chapter explained the data analysis procedures carried out through the study and reported the results obtained from them. Further analysis, discussions, and interpretation of the data will be presented in the next chapter in more depth and from various perspectives.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to analyze the perceptions of the first year English Language and Literature students in a Turkish University towards the practice of reflective writing. Additionally, the effects of reflective writing on the way students interpret and engage with literary works were examined. The researcher constructed a reflective writing framework for the evaluation of 'reflectivity' in the light of existing frameworks in the literature, and used it to analyze the sample group's reflective responses, which they wrote throughout the study in response to literary works of different genres.

The data were obtained through written responses to a set of open ended questions about the literary texts and through an open-ended interview with the participants about their attitudes towards reflective writing activities. First, the participants went through the reading and discussion stages for six weeks, and every week they were given a set of questions demanding in-depth exploration of the texts. They were free to respond into writing any of the questions they wished, in order to preserve the voluntary nature of the study. These responses were analyzed and rated by using the framework designed for the study. Afterwards, in-depth interviews were held with the participants in order to gain further insights into the specific ideas of the participants related to certain aspects of reflective writing process.

This chapter discusses the results obtained in the study, following the same titles and order as in chapter 4. The results of the present study and similar studies in the literature are then compared. The final sections suggest some pedagogical

implications, discuss the limitations of the present study and outline some suggestions for further research.

Discussions of the Findings

This section elaborates on the significant findings and conclusions which were obtained through the data collection and analysis process. The findings of the study will be elaborated under two sub-sections referring to each research question: (1) participating English Language and Literature students' perceptions of the reflective writing process, and its effects on the students' overall engagement in writing and literature.

Participants' Perceptions of the Reflective Writing Process

The first question of the study investigated first year English Language and Literature students' perceptions of the reflective writing process. The data were obtained from the in-depth interviews with the six participants. The participants' answers were also evaluated in the light of their written responses in order to explore whether there was similarity in their answers. The answers they gave in the interviews mostly showed tremendous consistencies with the demonstrated ideas and ratings in the written responses. The interview questions and the answers were grouped into four categories and their analyses were carried out under these categories. This order will be followed in chapter 5.

Preconceptions about the Study

In the interview stage of the study, participants were asked about any initial fears or negative feelings they had about the reflective writing process and, if they had such fears or feelings, how they overcame them. These two questions, having a

complementary nature, were designed to explore whether reflective writing made any contributions to dispelling those fears and negativity. Most of the participants directly stated that they had some negative expectations and these expectations mostly resulted from the dull nature of most departmental writing activities and feedback giving priority to grammar. These findings are similar to the ones in Troia, Harbaugh, Shankland, Wolbers and Lawrence's (2012) study which maintains that the stereotypical nature of some writing activities and teachers' negative feedback mostly focusing on grammatical points have a limiting effect on both the quality of writing and motivation of the learners. This indicates that generalization of negative attitudes, which result from a specific experience in a specific departmental course, to other activities and courses, may result in a certain type of prejudice, and affect the engagement of the participants even in a voluntary study.

Another point explaining their negative attitudes toward writing activities was the lack of control they have in traditional writing activities in terms of having a say about length, style, or topic. Departmental writing activities are all designed for students; however, they feel that their individual voice and ideas are neglected in the making of the activities, which pushes them away from writing. The study conducted by Graham, Berninger, and Fan (2007) about writing attitudes and writing achievements shows similar findings considering the negative effect of a pre-determined strict nature of writing activities both on the motivation of the students into writing activities and on writing quality. These features have been cited among demotivating factors in writing attitudes, giving rise to a generalization of negativity and fear about all writing activities (Ismail, Elias, Albakri, Perumal, & Muthusamy, 2010). On the contrary, in this study, participants were given a set of open ended questions

about the literary texts and the discussions focusing on these texts. Each question set was designed after the discussions of the literary texts, and the researcher tried to concentrate on the major points that had emerged through the discussions in order to create the questions.

By focusing on the major points raised by the participants themselves and by asking for their individual perspectives on the issues at hand, the present study provided the participants with an environment free from the factors they labeled as negative. When the total number of all the engagement categories is evaluated, a significant and consistent rise in all categories can be noted over the course of the study. The total word count of the written responses started as 1,039 words in the first response and the total number of engagement categories was 75. By the last response, the total word count was 4,097 and total category engagement was 317. As mentioned in a similar study (Boscolo & Hidi, 2007), even freeing writing from some limitations and turning it into a more individual-centered activity giving priority to communicating one's ideas and beliefs might achieve a tremendous increase in students' participation into activities. Thus, we may conclude that even without adding some extra features to writing activities, just by removing some negative factors, the participants might be spurred towards full participation into activities and this removal might yield the greatly increased amount of writing that the participants produced.

According to Lo and Hyland (2007), increasing the range of reading and writing topics, giving priority on individual's ideas, and giving liberty to the writers might dispel negative preconceptions of students toward writing activities. Even though in that study the students got lower writing scores for accuracy and organization, the liberation of the students in terms of the topic range and greater

emphasis on meaning significantly increased their engagement and motivation. Most of the participants in the present study also stated similar factors that helped them to dispel their initial fears and contributed to their engagement and motivation. In the present study, the fact that participants were free to take part in the study and that they were left free to respond to the question sets seemed to help them to get over their fears and get accustomed to the study. This indicates that the more the individuality and liberty of the participant is encouraged, the more s/he feels engaged and motivated, which helps him/her to get over their preconceptions and fears.

Another point that facilitated the participants' overcoming of negative preconceptions and fears was the discussion sessions conducted throughout and after the reading activities. Some studies (Swan, 2002; Van Lier, 1998) focusing on the effect of interaction and discussions on student development noted that learner-learner and teacher-learner type discussions contribute positively to learners' engagement and development. This may indicate that the interaction through the process helped the participants in the idea-development process. The while-reading and follow-up group discussion sessions presented the participants with not only a wide range of ideas but also an opportunity to elaborate on these ideas. Exposure to different ideas and elaborating on them gave students much needed time and a wider perspective to digest the ideas and expand these ideas according to their original way of thinking in the writing stage.

The Effect of Reflectivity on the Writer

The other set of questions in the interview aimed at exploring the effect of the reflective writing process on the participants' general perspectives about life and literature and possible contributions of the reflective writing process to their general

level of English and understandings of literature. All writers reported that the present study had definite effects on their perspectives towards life and literature; moreover, nearly all of them reported experiencing solid improvements in terms of their knowledge of English and English literature.

The most common improvement the participants cited is the strong increase in awareness, analysis and in-depth understanding about literature and life. This finding is well-supported by the increase in the categories of awareness and analysis in the framework. When total ratings in the reflective writing framework are taken into consideration, the awareness and analysis categories exhibited the highest increases. Total awareness and analysis ratings started from 17 and 12, and by the last response, examples showing evidence of these categories reached 84 and 79, respectively. This steady increase suggests that awareness and analysis are among the most easily motivated skills, which are also among the most sought-after skills in reflectivity. Some studies (Flower & Hayes, 1981; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Kolb, 1984; Moffett, 1982) focusing on reflectivity in writing posit that the main targets of writing activities should be to facilitate awareness, analysis and discovery, to lead to an in-depth understanding of the target material (the literary texts in this context), the ideas emerging from the texts, and their relation to the social environment and life of the participants. In a study investigating the effects of writing strategies both in the first language (L1) and in English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language (ESL/EFL), Susser (1994) found that strategies adopting process writing, mainly reflective writing, made a significant contribution to participants' awareness levels of both the text and themselves. Through reflective writing, the participants in Susser's study gained an in-depth understanding and were able to reach a satisfactory level of

analysis of both the target materials and their personal attitudes and ideas about the target materials. The increase in Susser's study in terms of textual analysis and awareness and personal analysis and awareness exhibits great similarity with the present study. This indicates that the application of reflectivity to writing may result in a nearly 5 to 6 fold increase in the awareness, analysis and in-depth understanding of the participants in a relatively short period.

Some participants also mentioned the change in their perspectives and ideas through reflective writing. Reflectivity helped them to achieve a wider range of textual and personal perspectives, through the exploration of alternative meanings in the target materials and personally adding to those particular meanings while writing. Many studies (Cumming, Bereiter, & Scardamalia, 1989; Cumming, 2001; Graves, 1994; Graves, 1978, 1983; Graves, 1996; Hyland, 2003; Murray, 1969; Murray & Kujundzic, 2005; Murray, 2002; Parson, 1985; Straub, 2000; Xiaochun, 2007) have noted that reflective writing helps participants to attain a wider perspective toward the target materials and even toward their personal lives and daily experiences. These studies recorded significant changes in participants' ideas about academic issues through the reflective writing process. In a study investigating the effects of reflectivity and reflective writing on conceptual change, Mason & Boscolo (2000) found that reflective writing activities make a significant contribution to the writers' range of perspectives and to their idea-construction processes. The participants' range of interests increased in a healthy way to include many new ideas considering the items in the curriculum and issues in their daily lives. All these findings demonstrate that reflectivity in writing can have a positive effect on developing richness of ideas, resulting in more prolific

thinkers and writers. The new perspectives the participants attained are of great value for their cognitive and social development both in academic and social circles.

Some participants of the present study also mentioned changes in their behaviors through and after the reflective writing process. This claim parallels the self-regulation category in the reflective writing framework. Even though this category is the least developed one in terms of total number, the increase noted was still five-fold (from 2 to 10), suggesting that the change in ideas and perspectives resulted in some changes in behavior. Behavioral change is among the major aims of the reflective process. Cooper (2003) reported a significant correlation between reflective writing and positive changes in the overall behavior of the participants in their social conduct. He also recorded a modest increase in the participants' problem-solving skills, which is also among the major aims of reflectivity. The parallel between such studies in the literature and the present study demonstrates that reflectivity in the form of reading, discussions and writing might result in conceptual and behavioral changes in the participants. The reason why the extent of conceptual changes and behavioral changes is not similar (with behavioral changes much lower in number) may be related to the time required for that particular change to be revealed. The application period of most studies is somewhere between six and fourteen weeks. This period might be enough for recognition of some concepts, change in these concepts, or the creation of new ones, but the time needed to see actual behavior changes as a result of these conceptual ones is likely to be much longer.

Prominent Positive and Negative Points in the Process

The participants' comments about the positive and negative points of the study generally concentrate on positive points. All participants strongly claimed that the

reflective writing process had many prominent positive points including its voluntary nature, freedom, the lack of limitations on ideas, discussions, discovery, awareness, and the expansion of knowledge and ideas. By labeling these features as positive traits, the participants of the present study confirmed that the study had effects on these features and they regarded these effects as positive contributions. The awareness and discovery, idea-creation, and discussion features have also been mentioned by participants of earlier studies (Cumming et al., 1989; Cumming, 2001; Flower & Hayes, 1981;; D. H. Graves, 1994; Graves, 1978, 1983; Graves, 1996; Hatton & Smith, 1995; Hyland, 2003; Kolb, 1984; Moffett, 1982; Murray, 1969; Murray & Kujundzic, 2005; Murray, 2002; Parson, 1985; Straub, 2000; Xiaochun, 2007).

The voluntary nature of the study was labeled as a prominent positive point motivating participants to take part in the study and to carry out the requirements throughout the study. There are some studies though not many (Bain, Mills, Ballantyne, & Packer, 2002; Shields, 1994; Yi, 2010) mentioning voluntary participation as one of the requirements of reflective writing. Giving the right of choice to the participants motivates them to follow the writing activities because the voluntary nature of the exercise helps them to adopt and personalize the writing activity. This shows that the liberation of the participants in their choice of participation and the choice of their writing topics is one of the prominent points increasing motivation and engagement levels.

None of the participants reported a direct negative impact of the reflective writing process on their academic and personal lives. Apart from some weak points, such as selection of the reading materials, the number of the participants in discussion sessions, and the length of the study, (Charon & Hermann, 2012; Fowler, 2007;

Kalman, 2008; Underwood, 1998), no study in the literature has reported any overt negative impact of reflectivity on either academic and personal development. In an unexpected sense, one participant in the present study did claim that the study had a negative impact on her perspective toward academic life in particular and personal life in general. She explained that the awareness gained about some concepts in literature and life, and the exposure to a voluntary study in which the writers are liberated and their ideas are seen as unique and valuable, have resulted in the developing of a somewhat negative perspective towards the regular departmental courses. The participant did not categorize her negative perspective as a direct negative effect of the study. She mentioned that the study helped her to see a model reading, discussion and writing program, which led to a negative attitude towards the traditionally designed departmental courses.

Most participants selected short stories and plays as the most appealing literary forms. According to them, this is related to the length of the text to be covered in order to reach an overall understanding of the major issues in the text. The participants in the present study stated that the length of the reading material was not the only reason why most of them labeled short stories and plays as appealing. Additionally, a closer analysis of human psychology, the similarity of the characters and the issues in the texts to the participants and issues in their personal lives were also cited by the participants of the present study among motivating factors. The overall rating of the participants in the sessions focusing on the excerpt from a short story ("To Room 19", total rating 317) and a play ("Silence", total rating 288) are the highest ones in the framework. The significant increase in these two sessions confirms the identification of these texts as the most appealing by the participants. This indicates that short texts,

such as short stories and short plays, are more appealing and thus more effective in raising engagement and motivation of learners in the reflective writing process. The study by Fecteau (1999) also found similar findings in that short texts provide participants with a lighter reading load, which, in return, facilitates their achieving an overall grasp of the reading.

Some learners also mentioned poems among the appealing forms of literature, which seems to be supported by engagement ratings in the framework (Basho, 123 and Crane 250). These two poem sessions constitute the third and fourth highest engagement ratings following the short story and play. Participants pointed out that the richness in emotions and perceptions helped them to enrich their understanding of literature and of life. Moreover, they also reported that the metaphorical aspect of the poetic language provides the participants more space, on which the readers might reach as many alternative concepts as they can handle. The participants mentioned that the poems are unquestionably challenging to read and write responses. However, the challenging nature of the poems invited the reader into thinking more and creating alternative ideas about the issues involved. Some studies (e.g. Jones, 2010) aiming at not only developing learners' vocabulary and grammar but also helping them to attain a more creative perspective in their writing, reported that poems are notably effective in the acquisition of grammatical and vocabulary skills and expansion in variety of perspectives and ideas. The correlation between the findings of the present study and Jones' study demonstrate that despite the challenging nature of the poems, they are effective for assisting learners' linguistic and emotional development.

Motivation

Even though there is not a direct question exploring the effect of the reflective writing process on the motivation of the learners, the participants raised many significant issues about various factors that de-motivated and motivated them. These factors can be grouped into two categories: negative factors and positive factors. In the present study, the participants reported that their motivation emerged and increased because of the absence of some factors (that is negative factors), and the presence of other factors (that is positive factors). The participants were insistent that pre-determined, strictly modeled reading/writing activities block their individuality and prevent unique ideas from flourishing. Bare grammatical feedback and grading were also seen as de-motivating factors.

In the present study, the participants reported that the absence of grading and grammatical feedback made the process appealing, and thus motivating. Some participants made a comparison between the present study and a departmental course called video studies. In that particular course, they were expected to write responses, which are limited in terms of length and topic. The responses were evaluated grammatically then graded, and these grades were added to their reading lesson. Some participants reported that after participating in the course for three or four weeks, they dropped the course even though they lost the extra credit. The other participants reported that they postponed the responses of that departmental course; instead, they allocated their time to the present study. When asked about the reasons why they dropped or ignored the departmental course, they pointed out that the grammatical feedback, grading mechanism and the strict limitations on the length and topic of the responses were among the factors pushing them away. One participant even reported

that he might not have participated in the present study, if it had adopted grammatical feedback and grades. The factors such as grammatical feedback and grading are classified among the de-motivating factors by some studies (DeBoer, Anderson, & Abdulaziz, 2007; Docan, 2006; Jones, 2010; Kohn, 1994; Pulfrey, Buchs, & Butera, 2011; Robins et al., 1995). In most cases, the participants reported that the idea that they were going to be graded in terms of certain criteria resulted in a decrease in their willingness to participate in the activities. Studies focusing on the effect of (grammatical) feedback on engagement and motivation (Goudas, Minardou, & Kotis, 2000; Waddell, 2004) found similar findings results feedback and motivation interaction. Grammatical feedback has been found to either have no contributing effect to the motivation of learners or to actually de-motivate them. The parallel between the present study and other studies in the literature indicates that the factors of grading and grammatical feedback have a negative correlation with the motivation issue.

As for the positive factors, the participants emphasized the free nature of the study, the value given to their individuality, and the wide range of activities involved in the process. These traits were linked to the participants' willingness and motivation for engaging into the reading, discussion, and writing activities conducted throughout the reflective practice. Giving more freedom to the writer in terms of the length and the range of the response topics, and constructing activities around more flexible frames are also among the frequently cited characteristics which motivated learners towards the activities--both by the participants of this study and by some studies in the literature (Ackerman & Smith, 1988; Baetens, 1997; Hedge, 2000; McKinney, 1976; Raimes, 2000). The participants of the present study showed a steady increase in the word count of their responses. The total word count of six participants was 1,039 in the

first response, and it rose to 4,097 in the last response. Moreover, the topics they addressed were very different from each other, enriching the overall production by the participants. This indicates that contrary to general belief, lifting the length and topic limits does not result in a decline in amount of production and richness of the material students produce.

The importance given to the individuality of the participants and letting them express their ideas are also mentioned among the motivating factors. Nearly all participants reported that they started to feel like real writers as they had the chance to express their individual ideas on more appealing topics, such as human relations, and the human condition in modern society. The participants reported that they felt an urge to express more in the discussions and write more in their responses, as the platform provided for them was not the one in which they were expected to listen to an omnipotent lecturer, take notes and rewrite these notes in the demanded situations, namely examinations. Rather, they reported, the reflective process provided a basis on which they might unfold their individuality and express their own ideas. Some studies in the literature (Elbow, 2002; Faigley, 1986; Nunan, 1991) also argue that creating an environment in writing activities, in which the participants might express their individuality and in which their ideas are welcomed, is a major motivating factor resulting in an increase in the engagement of the participants in writing. This indicates that the more the activities help the participants to use their own *voice*, the more engaged they will become.

The variety of the texts is also among the factors of motivation. One of the common complaints about the departmental reading and writing activities is the limited range of the reading materials. Being exposed to some challenging texts, which greatly

differed from the texts in the curriculum of the participants in terms of subject matter and era, helped the participants to be more alert and attentive. One participant reported that she felt as though she had been imprisoned in the 16th century, and what was worse, the guardian was the same playwright, enclosing them within the same play, for the whole term. This claim clearly expresses how negatively exposure to the same era, writers and works affects the students. A report by Gambrell (2011) found that providing access to a wide range of material relevant to participants' lives and opportunity for interaction about these materials significantly increases participants' motivation. Confirming this, the findings of the present study and other studies in the literature demonstrate that the expansion of the reading materials' range, their relevance to the students' lives, and provision of discussion sessions focusing on the reading topics contribute to the engagement levels of the learners.

Findings Emerging from the Ratings of the Reflective Responses

The categories of awareness, analysis and personalization are the categories in which the participants displayed the highest ratings and the highest increase. The categories of awareness and analysis are further grouped into two subcategories textual and self. The two categories, awareness and analysis, are complementary, starting from exploring the issues in the texts and extending to unearthing issues concerning the participants themselves. These categories will be dealt with together because of their complementary nature. The initial rating of Awareness and Analysis were registered at 17 and 12, respectively. These ratings reached 84 and 79 by the sixth response of the present study. The increases in both categories are well supported by the findings in the interviews of the participants. All participants reported that the range of their perception of the literature, life and their own personality has noticeably increased

through the study. They also declared that they might reach alternative and clearer conceptions of literary works and their own personal ideas. This steady increase and participants' interpretation of these two categories indicate that the categories of awareness and analysis are the most easily motivated ones in reflectivity. However, being easy to motivate does not imply that these categories are lower in value. These two categories form a basis for the other categories, as these might be regarded as prerequisites of the whole reflective process. One study (Perrin, 2003) focusing on the effect of multi-layered writing activities on awareness and analysis found that these kind of writing activities significantly contributed to the analytical skills of the participants by promoting awareness about the issues treated, and about how the participants felt about these issues prior and following the writing activities. Hyland (2003) also found that there was a correlation between textual awareness, analysis and writing, each of which contributes to the other. The findings of the literature and the present study indicate that for reflective writing, textual and self awareness and analysis of the self through the analysis of the issues in the target texts, are among the most easily motivated features. Moreover, these are among the most sought-after features in reflectivity as they can be regarded as the basis of the reflective process, motivating engagement and thereby writing. As a result, these two categories, and perhaps their subcategories, might be included in the any list of items evaluating reflectivity in writing activities.

Though it might seem lower in comparison with the categories of Awareness and Analysis, the category of Personalization exhibited a notable upward trend and became the third highest category in the study. The steady increase in that particular category clearly shows that the participants adopted a more writer-like stance toward

reflective writing. The overall aims of reflectivity are to help the participants to provide personal responses to discussions, then carry this personal attitude to a broader level. This category seeks to help the participants internalize the insights gained through readings. The participants' written responses contain vivid examples of the awareness, analysis and personalization. This clearly indicates that adopting a reflective attitude in writing is highly beneficial in evolving the writing process and in helping participants to create more personal, original responses. Many researchers (Elbow, 1973; Graves, 1983; Murray, 1969; Rohman, 1965) suggested that visibility of the personal voice and internalization of the ideas are more important issues in writing than the grammatical correctness of the sentences and the coherence of the text as a whole. The incalculable value of gaining a personal attitude over other linguistic traits makes the category of personalization one of the prerequisites of not only reflective writing but also all writing approaches. The high number of counts for this category in the present study indicates that reflectivity writing is a prolific way of increasing this necessary skill.

The number of ratings for the category of synthesis did not exhibit a notable increase for nearly all participants. The decreases and increases might be seen as perfectly normal for any category in any study. However, according to some studies in the literature (Arthur, 1998; Blum, 1955; Maturana & Varela, 1980; Barton & Haslett, 2007), we might expect a parallel increase or decrease in categories of analysis, synthesis and hypothesizing. On the contrary, the 235 count in analysis steeply dropped to 136 in synthesis then slightly increased to 157 in hypothesizing for the participants of the present study. The totality of the reflectivity creates a correlation between these categories, which is not shown in the present study because of the

fluctuation in the counts of these three categories. The mismatch in the total counts of these categories indicates an important irregularity to be addressed. The sharp decrease in the count of the synthesis category deforms the logical order of the idea-creation and reflectivity process and results in immature and over-estimated conclusions. This irregularity may result from the departmental courses and overall academic habits of the participants. It suggests that the participants do not see synthesis as a required category or skill to reach to a well-structured hypothesis. However, synthesis is also one of the significant steps in reflection as it is in this category that one is able to reach to the “autopoiesis” activity, by collecting, uniting, evaluating, then reuniting ideas both from one’s personal experiences and readings and other people’s, thence formulating new ideas and a new “self”. The reason why the irregularity in the overall counts of these categories may be linked to the departmental courses is the participants’ reports about these courses. The gap in the idea-creation and reflection process adopted in departmental courses may have affected other activities, whether these activities are conducted individually or voluntarily.

The categories of Involvement and Self-Regulation are the two categories which exhibited the lowest counts (76, 32). Even though these categories also registered a notable increase, the total number is still well below those of the other categories. Some participants described reflectivity as a life-changing event, which refers to the self-regulation category and some others reported they carried out much more than the requirements of the reflective writing process, which correlates with the involvement category; nevertheless, the incidence of such elements is notably lower than the rest of the categories. This downward trend may have something to do with the requirements of these two categories. They demand more effort from the

participants than they are accustomed to making in their departmental courses. Using deeper processing strategies such as elaboration, providing meaningful conclusions alternative to the ones in the texts, open-ended writings, expanding the writing, and originality in writing, are among the major characteristics of these categories. As can be seen, these skills might be regarded as highly demanding for the participants; however, there are other possible factors which might cause the lower trend in these categories. In the interviews, some participants reported that they got lower grades when, in their regular coursework, they included their own original ideas, and when they wrote more than the allowed word limit or tried to connect the texts with other texts which were not included in the curriculum. Moreover, examinations do not include self-regulation skills, as the participants were not responsible for rebuilding their ideological and practical life spheres after each text they read. Having been exposed to such negative reinforcements, the participants might have been expected to exhibit moderate counts in these two categories. In a study about the writing attitudes and engagement adopted by writers of English as their second language, Clark (2003) reported that involvement and deeper processing and meaningful alternative conclusions are among the significant components of writing, especially reflective writing. He also reports that testing based L2 writing activities yields successful test takers not writers. The hesitancy to be involved more in writing activities and the lack of tendency towards reevaluating the lives of the participants in the light of the readings may well be related to the limits that the academic activities impose on the learners. The curriculum directs them to do well in exams; thus they do not feel the need to cross the lines as long as they are seen as successful in the systematic examinations.

If all categories are evaluated as a whole without dividing them into categories and subcategories, it can be seen that all categories exhibited a stable upward trend, starting with 75 total counts of engagement samples in the first response and reaching to 317 total counts in the last response. Though it took place in a limited time (6 responses over 9 weeks), with a lot of primary responsibilities both academic and personal, the participants managed to fully participate in the activities, and composed written reflective responses whose total word count increased from 1,039 in the first response to 4,097 in the last response. In addition to the increase in counts of the samples and word counts of the responses, the quality, vividness and originality of the examples within these categories also improved. All these increases reflect and confirm other studies in the literature (Flower, 1994; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Freire, 1974; Moffett, 1982; Straub, 2000), though the studies in the literature did not investigate and evaluate these traits within a single study. The findings of the present study and the other studies in the literature indicate that reflective writing is a highly beneficial tool in raising participants' engagement levels in writing and literature.

Pedagogical Implications

The most important implication of the present study for writing pedagogy is the voluntary nature of the reflective writing process. The participants generally pointed out that having the choice to take part in the study was one of its most appealing traits. They reported that they sometimes did not participate in the obligatory departmental courses to take part in the present study, and sometimes allocated their study time to the reading and writing tasks of the present study though they had other responsibilities and homework for their departmental courses. They might seem to create a conflicting structure, as forming an activity depending on voluntary participation always seems

very difficult for normal departmental courses because of the legitimacy and practicality of the courses. It is generally expected that when the activities are voluntary the participants might have a natural tendency not to take part in them. However, contrary to the common view, when asked why they followed the process despite their already loaded curriculum, the participants of the present study gave the voluntary nature of the study as the reason for their motivation for full participation. They reported that in a voluntary study, through the personal selection of the course or activity, they own the course, and the activity becomes an individual one rather than one of the courses imposed by the administrators of the department. It seems that in terms of raising engagement in writing and literature, organizing voluntary activities in the form of extra-curricular activities, might prove to have great possibilities.

The participants' negative perspectives towards grading suggest the need to have ungraded reflective writing assignments in regular departmental courses. While this may not be feasible due to institutional requirements, it might be possible for students to keep a form of reading diary in weekly or monthly form and the instructor might grade these diaries solely on the basis of whether or not it was completed, not on its content or structure. By this means, the reflectivity might be incorporated in the school curriculum without deforming the free, non-graded nature of the reflectivity and even with meeting the institutional requirements for grading.

Creativity, which is mostly ignored in the writing frameworks and rubrics of many universities literature departments, might be included in the frameworks and rubrics evaluating students' writings. Such as revision to the evaluation process might help students to recognize the importance of creativity in writing. The inclusion of creativity in writing rubrics might also help teachers to foster this sought-after skill.

Though regarded as an inevitable component of any teaching-learning activities, the participants of the present study did not identify grading and feedback, mostly grammatical feedback, among the contributing factors of engagement into writing and literature-centered activities. According to the overall comments of the study participants, grading and grammatical feedback in their departmental courses tends to increase anxiety, and anxiety is reported as one of the de-motivating factors in writing activities. The participants' bold expressions clearly indicated that they envision grading not as a fair measurement of their success, but as a way to reward learners who manage to tune themselves into requirement of the texts and to punish learners who do not meet these requirements. It would be difficult to integrate reflective writing into academic curricula without grading the output; however, it might be conducted in the form of an extra-curricular activity to avoid the grading issue. The feedback provided for the participants would have to be carefully planned. The participants are expected to reach alternative ideas, combine different aspects of different texts, internalize these ideas into their lives, and thus they naturally expect something more than bare grammatical corrections and grades as the feedback and rewards of their reflectivity and writings. From the reports of the participants, it might be implied that feedback should focus on meaning and idea-creation aspects of the reflective responses and even though grading cannot be avoided, it must be transformed into a more subtle form, or grades might be given in the form of participation and production of the responses, such as full credit for the participants taking part in the response writing activities.

Even though the present study did help the participants to improve in the self-regulation category, this improvement was only a slight one (from a total of two

samples in the first response to ten samples in the last response) in comparison with the other categories. Self-regulation is one of the key traits of reflectivity, as reflectivity seeks for modifications in perspectives and behaviours of the participants. Thus, to promote this skill more, the application period of the study might be increased from six weeks to one term or even two terms. All participants reported that they experienced major changes in their lives throughout the course of the study, and they labeled the reading, discussions and writings as life-changing activities. Moreover, they expressed their willingness to carry on the study for a much longer time. Thus, through increasing the amount of time and by applying similar reflective studies in the form of extra-curricular activities, changes in perspectives and behaviours might also be improved further.

Limitations of the Study

This study shed light on the perceptions of the first year English Language and Literature students towards the practice of reflective writing and its effects on the way students interpret and engage with literary works. But it has several limitations.

First, as with the existing frameworks in the literature, the present framework cannot avoid depending on subjectivity. Even though more than 50 instructors worldwide provided insights into the categories and their interpretations, there are still some overlapping points in terms of the rhetoric and epistemology of the framework. To overcome these irregularities, and attain a more valid framework, the reflective framework should be monitored with larger numbers of participants from different departments, so that it might evolve into a more generalizable and valid framework.

Second, as with most qualitative studies in the literature, the present study also kept the number of the participants to a limited population for the sake of

manageability of the emerging data, which consisted of written responses reaching a total of 13,507 words, and transcription of the interviews, reaching a total of 25,258 words. However, for the same reasons as with the framework issue, the study should be applied to a greater number of participants not only having the same background with the participants of the present study but also to students from different proficiency levels and departments.

Third, one of the most frequently mentioned issues related to the limitations of the present study was the time limits, as it was confined to a six-week period. The participants on many occasions reported that to attain further benefits and improvement, the application period should be increased to at least two terms. It will be very difficult to integrate such a study into academic courses because the grading mechanism might deform the voluntary and free nature of the study.

Lastly, the part of the interview about the pre-conceptions of participants of the reflective writing process might have been done before the actual conducting of the reading, discussion and writing sessions of the study. This might have gained more objective ideas about participants' conceptions of reflectivity and writing.

Recommendations for Further Research

Great effort was made to ensure the validity and reliability of the measures used in this study; however, more research is needed to validate the findings. Such a study can be made with larger and more diverse samples of students from different proficiency levels to have a broader picture of students' perceptions of the practice of reflective writing and its effects on their interpretation and engagement with literary works.

Even though the overall reaction about the selection of the literary works was not a negative one, when the overall counts of the engagement categories are evaluated, it can be seen that the number of counts tended to increase in the sessions in which short stories and plays were the base materials of the reflectivity. The participants reported that the works focusing on modern human psychology and interpersonal relations were significantly more appealing than the others. By carefully selecting the target material from present day short stories and plays, further insight might be gained into the effect of the texts on engagement and reflectivity.

Through another study which also includes reading, discussion and reflective writing and interview components, the discussion sessions might be recorded and researchers might use the reflective framework to analyze the discourse of the discussions in order to evaluate the level of reflection in the discussions.

Lastly, to become aware of the long-term effect of reflective writing on the overall engagement levels of the participants in writing (and literature in our context), parallel studies having longer application periods should be conducted.

Conclusion

The research investigated the effects of reflective writing on the engagement levels of first year English Literature students into writing and literature and it compiled an alternative framework to evaluate reflectivity in written responses. It constructed the framework on seven categories indicative of engagement, and tried to find parallels between the ratings of engagement and subsequent interviews with the participants, in order to evaluate the validity of these categories in the evaluation of engagement in reflective writing. It found that reflective writing is a key element in increasing students' engagement in both writing and literature.

The results and pedagogical implications proposed in this chapter will be beneficial to explore the sources of engagement and to increase it through constructing parallel activities. It is hoped that future research on effects of reflective writing on engagement levels of learners into language learning will reach a higher level of clarity, through which writing activities will evolve in more productive forms.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A.

Reflective Writing Rating for Each Participant

Student 1		R1 Kincaid	R2 Lawrence	R3 Basho	R4 Crane	R5 Pinter	R6 Lessing	Total
	<i>Word count</i>	60	88	64	228	283	395	1118
	<i>Category</i>							
	Awareness	0	2	1	3	4	7	17
	Analysis	2	0	1	6	6	6	21
	Synthesis	1	2	0	3	0	2	8
	Hypothesizing	0	3	0	6	5	6	20
	Self Regulation	1	1	0	1	0	2	5
	Personalization	0	3	0	2	1	3	9
Involvement	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	
Total	4	11	2	21	16	27	81	

Student 2		R1 Kincaid	R2 Lawrence	R3 Basho	R4 Crane	R5 Pinter	R6 Lessing	Total
	<i>Word count</i>	184	162	204	577	486	463	2076
	<i>Category</i>							
	Awareness	3	2	9	7	8	7	36
	Analysis	5	4	3	7	3	8	30
	Synthesis	2	0	4	5	2	5	18
	Hypothesizing	5	2	2	8	5	3	25
	Self Regulation	0	0	0	0	0	1	1
	Personalization	3	6	5	9	5	6	34
Involvement	0	2	0	3	1	0	6	
Total	18	16	23	39	24	30	150	

Student 3		R1 Kincaid	R2 Lawrence	R3 Basho	R4 Crane	R5 Pinter	R6 Lessing	Total
	<i>Word count</i>	181	190	112	535	438	601	2057
	<i>Category</i>							
	Awareness	6	5	4	8	10	10	43
	Analysis	3	5	2	15	9	19	53
	Synthesis	2	4	1	8	4	10	29
	Hypothesizing	2	8	1	10	4	10	35
	Self Regulation	0	1	0	0	1	1	3
	Personalization	4	2	0	10	9	11	36
Involvement	1	3	2	5	4	3	18	
Total	18	28	10	56	41	64	217	

Student 4		R1 Kincaid	R2 Lawrence	R3 Basho	R4 Crane	R5 Pinter	R6 Lessing	Total
	<i>Word count</i>	158	261	243	369	346	385	1762
	<i>Category</i>							
	Awareness	2	4	6	4	9	10	35
	Analysis	1	5	3	4	5	10	28
	Synthesis	3	5	1	6	8	3	26
	Hypothesizing	1	3	1	5	6	9	25
	Self Regulation	0	1	0	1	1	1	4
	Personalization	3	5	2	5	9	10	34
Involvement	3	3	2	4	3	2	17	
Total	13	26	15	29	41	45	169	

Student 5		R1 Kincaid	R2 Lawrence	R3 Basho	R4 Crane	R5 Pinter	R6 Lessing	Total
	<i>Word count</i>	223	244	248	577	598	1176	3066
	<i>Category</i>							
	Awareness	4	7	10	12	15	36	84
	Analysis	1	5	4	15	15	24	64
	Synthesis	1	2	1	16	10	11	41
	Hypothesizing	1	2	1	3	4	4	15
	Self Regulation	1	2	1	3	4	4	15
	Personalization	5	5	3	11	11	16	51
Involvement	2	2	2	0	5	8	19	
Total	15	25	22	60	64	103	289	

Student 6		R1 Kincaid	R2 Lawrence	R3 Basho	R4 Crane	R5 Pinter	R6 Lessing	Total
	<i>Word count</i>	233	246	110	696	1066	1077	3428
	<i>Category</i>							
	Awareness	2	3	5	14	27	14	65
	Analysis	0	2	1	11	13	12	39
	Synthesis	1	1	0	2	7	3	14
	Hypothesizing	2	1	0	8	19	7	37
	Self Regulation	0	0	0	1	3	1	5
	Personalization	1	2	2	7	18	8	38
Involvement	1	1	0	2	8	3	15	
Total	7	10	8	45	95	48	213	

Appendix B

Response Questions (Doris Lessing's To Room Nineteen)

1. The story presents three different ways to handle a problem and describes these ways in relation to each other: forgiving, understanding, and forgetting a wrongdoing. What is your understanding of these concepts?
2. If they are different, where does the difference lie?
3. What do you think about the symbols of house, garden and river in the story? How do you feel about them?
4. What does the evil *he* character stand for? Why he?
5. What is your impression of their marriage? What do you think about Lessing's perception of marriage?
6. What lured Susan to the hotel room 19? What might Susan have found in that hotel room?
7. Why do you think the mother room did not work?
8. What was the thing Susan was trying to run away? What sort of things do you run away?
9. Susan was surely going through hard times. The gradual solutions did not prevent her from killing herself. What would be your solution to her problem?
10. Why do you think Susan fabricated a story about hotel room and said she was meeting with another man there?

Appendix C

Interview Questions

- 1) What were your initial fears and difficulties about writing responses?
- 2) Have you managed to get over them? How?
- 3) Has writing responses influenced the way you THINK about life in general and literature in particular? How ?
- 4) In what way do you think this experiment may have helped your English and literary knowledge?
- 5) What were the highlights of this experiment for you?
- 6) Do you think there might have been some negative or unhelpful aspects? If yes, describe them.
- 7) Which form of literature (play, poem, short story, novel extract) appealed to you most? Why?

Appendix D

A Sample Reflective Writing Response

R1

As it is stated at the beginning of the story, the logical marriage of Susan and Mathew are close to love marriage. Their marriage follows the way of most marriages. The forgiving, understanding and forgetting are important themes in the story. Forgiving and understanding are conflicting themes and Lessing stresses this conflict. Forgiving and understanding a mistake are different completely. Forgiving a mistake means that you do not understand the event, you cannot analyze it, and you ignore it. But if you understand a mistake is something else. If you understand a mistake, it means that this is not a mistake. The person is doing something and other people understands this action so it is meaningful and it is not a mistake. Susan understand Mathew when he cheated her with a younger woman. So Susan supported him because she thinks he is right. I think her reaction must be different. She should divorce and continue her life as herself with her children.

R2 / R3

The house, garden and river themes are important. However, Susan hates these things because of "he". She sees a ghost in the house, garden and near the river. This ghost is a male. This evil ghost is a male and this shows the feminist side of the writer. Man has a weak and bad character. For Susan, the house is not home, because there is no love in it. It is a negative environment for her. Garden is also is a negative place for her, because garden is an aquarium. It has plants and threes in it, but it is not natural. It seems natural. But it is an illusion. This might be what Lessing wants to tell. Susan is

married, she has a family. But it seems like that. In fact, she has nothing. She is like a prisoner in the house and garden.

R4

For Mathew, her relation with Susan is just a piece of paper. Their marriage does not have very much love in it. So he has relations with another women many times. And he feels upset at the beginning, but he does not feel bad later. Because Susan does not get angry and understands his actions. This understanding supports his actions. This means that Susan also does not love him. And he does not get angry when he learns that Susan meets someone at a hotel every day. Lessing is not objective here. She has negative feelings about the modern marriages. She criticize this concept and shows that there must be something else in the marriage. It was like the short story we read last year. Something mechanics. People are like robots, machines. They do not have feelings because of industrialization. Susan knows that and she kills herself because she does not want to live like a robot. She lies to everyone in the story. Interesting. Mathew is honest because he tells his mistakes. But Susan lies to him. In fact she is innocent but a liar. But she is the only honest character in the story, noble, bold.

R4

I think Lessing is a feminist writer. Her perspective of marriage is not so positive. Lessing shows marriage as a prison for women. However, the marriage in the story is different. The love is not the centre of this marriage. I guess, they got married because everyone gets married. This is like a normal action. But we see that it is not enough. They do not have love in the marriage and the result is terrible. First Susan lost her mind, soul. She hated everything about her marriage, the house, garden, kids. Then she lost her body. She killed herself. To me, nothing changed. Before the killing she was

dead already. A ghost. She was the ghost that was walking in the house, sitting in the hotel room.

R5

The hotel room is like safe place. She goes there to hide herself from, I really do not know. This must be about her marriage. But if she has problems with her marriage, she might split from Mathew. I mean marriage is not a big factor to hide and kill. It must be more than this. Maybe, it is a reaction to getting old.

R6

They spared a room for Susan and called it Mother Room. This room was just for her to be alone, peaceful, relax. However, this room is also a part of the house and the family. Family members knew she was in the room. In that room she did not feel better because other rooms and other people were around her. She felt the pressure in the mother room. She ran away to the hotel room.

R7

She wants to totally alone, isolated from all the things. This, she cannot gain in that room. She also cannot gain it in the hotel room. I think she cannot gain it by killing herself. But she tried her chance. She must try this way because she cannot any other way. She tried being alone from time to time, went to a holiday, the mother room, the hotel room. But she returned to her family. She knew she must return to them after her loneliness. This feeling destroyed her. I sometimes feel this pressure. As if everything pressing on me and I go to a swimming pool. In the water nothing touches you. You do not feel pressure. You do not feel anything. It is similar to flying. After one hour of this freedom, I return to the outside world but this helps me to calm down. However, for Susan I guess this was the best choice. I mean killing herself and Lessing thinks same

as me. Lessing tried every way to help Susan but this last way is the only one. We cannot be sure that this method worked. But we must try.

R8

Susan is running away from other people. This is what seems. At first I also thought that as you can see in my other answers. But, I changed my mind. She is not running away. She is searching something. I mean, herself. You brought us a text from a philosopher, Foucault. You said he tries to describe human. In this description, he takes extra things from human, his job, marriage, literature, history. And he searches the plain human. I think, Lessing is doing the same thing to Susan. Lessing is taking extra things from Susan and searching the real Susan. For that reason, Susan wants to be alone, by herself.

R9

Susan lies to Mathew. She tells that she meets with someone in the hotel room. I guess this is right. She is meeting with herself. But she tells she meets with another man. Because it is more logical. If she says she sits in the room alone, no one will believe her. They will think that she is with a man in the hotel room naturally. She wants to hide her loneliness. She does not want to tell her loneliness to other people and says lies about the room.

Appendix E

A Sample Interview

Researcher : We are reading, discussing and writing for eight or nine weeks, including the interviews ten weeks. What did we read first ?

Student 1: Silence from Pinter, then Doris Lessing To Room 19. Basho poems

Researcher : and Crane poems. Mother and Daughter from Lawrence and

Student 1: The Girl by Jamaica ...

Researcher : Kincaid. It was a bit different from the others.

Student 1: repetitive use of imperatives. Do this, do not do that. I know you will do this but again I say do not do (Laughs)

Researcher : (Laughs) Yes. We did many things, we read many different works, plays, short stories, poems, novel excerpts. We spent a good sum of time together.

Student 1: Yes nearly three months, two and a half months.

Researcher : Well, I have eight basic questions in my mind but we can talk about other issues throughout the interview, if they arise. What was/were the most interesting literary work(s) among the ones we read throughout the study?

Student 1: I think the most appealing one for me was the play Silence by Pinter. In an instant, after all the birds began to fly, I mean after a very noisy scene, birds flapping their wings must be very noisy but after they fly a reasonable distance from the hearer, the surrounding environment falls into instant silence. This was perfect. I experienced it myself many times. The noise of the birds and instant silence following it.

Researcher : Can you explain more ? What exactly appealed to you here the scene or the way Pinter expressed this scene?

Student 1: Pinter's expressions, the way he expressed the scene. This is something more than expression, you feel the scene, you experience the scene while you are reading. In the midst of hundreds of birds, he managed to express and make us feel the silence.

Researcher : Very interesting. What more can we say about Pinter or Silence?

Student 1: Generally, plays are made up of dialogues between characters. However, Pinter uses a different way to construct his play. He uses monologues. In fact, nothing is monologue. I mean every speech is dialogue. But the speakers in the Pinter's play talk to themselves. Their speeches seem like monologues but they are internal dialogues with themselves.

Researcher : Yes, it reminds me of Waiting for Godot. As far as I know you do not have these kind of literary works in your curriculum.

Student 1: Yes, we read plays from 16th and 17th centuries, Shakespeare et al.

(Laughs)

Researcher : (Laughs) You mean you do not read more recent writers of the modern literature.

Student 1: Unfortunately.

Researcher : I deliberately picked these works to help you to be more objective in the readings, analysis and discussion sessions and the writing step.

Student 1: Yes. It was nice to read something different, something more related to the period and life we are living in.

Researcher : What else can you say about Pinter ? In fact, you may not have many things to say about the play because we did not read the whole play, we just read some excerpts from different parts of the play.

Student 1: Not exactly. I read the rest of the play. It did not take a long time to read the whole play. And I guess the other members read the whole play, too. We had some discussions about the play after the discussions we had together and from their arguments I can say that they are aware of the other issues expressed in the play.

Researcher : Interesting. So you mean that you had discussions about the works we read other than the discussions we held together in the class.

Student 1: Yes. Almost all our week, I mean in the breaks and the lunch break, we generally come together and talked more about the previous week's reading.

Researcher : So six literary critics are rising.

Student 1: In the general fabric of the play, we are directed from the actions to the stillness then from stillness to the actions. The play was full of such transitions. In one part, Pinter made us think that the character is running on the grass. Here the character is mobile and the grass is still. But the character says that the grass is moving beneath my feet. Here the character is still and the grass is moving. Here are the constant transition.

Researcher : Very interesting. I did not think like that before. Really interesting. Do you find other works appealing, I mean other than Silence?

Student 1: To Room 19 by Doris Lessing. The main character, Susan tries to escape from something, something that is not concrete. She seeks peace and solitude but she cannot satisfy this desire anywhere in the house. She wants to be away from the things about the family. While I was reading I felt the same urge to escape from the issues about the family. I mean something in the story made me desire loneliness. Maybe I was not aware that I was surrounded by my family, other people in the class. In the story, we criticise Susan, we try to find a way out to her but we recognize we are in a

similar situation. That is why we try to find a solution to her problem. Her problem is our problem.

Researcher : The way the main character withdraws herself from the social life and family life. Was this how you feel before reading or did reading result in such a feeling?

Student 1: Actually, I was feeling that way, same as the main character but was not aware of it because I have never thought about it or read about it. And Lessing described a character sharing my feelings. I mean, It is strange but I recognized I was feeling that way and other people were also feeling that way after reading and thinking about the Lessing's story. Everyone feels that way sometime. Even river irritates them. We want to world stop and be totally silent. We want to be in total isolation. This was perfect. I mean Lessing's description of this desire, feeling.

Researcher : So you think that Lessing wrote something that you share.

Student 1: Yes.

Researcher : Were you aware of these feelings before or you recognised your feelings with Lessing?

Student 1: I do not think that I might be able to answer this question properly. I think I had those feelings long before and I knew I had those feelings but this knowing was not a very conscious knowing. Lessing's descriptions about these desires and feelings helped me to put myself into context.

Researcher : Could you have recognized those feelings without Lessing?

Student 1: I think I could. But not so fast, not so clearly.

Researcher : The description of the event is really important for us to recognize and compare the event in the story and the events in the real life.

Student 1: I recognized that this feeling, I mean my feelings can only be expressed by these words. Lessing described it so perfectly that I recognized that I have the same feeling. It was more like a discovery to me.

Researcher : Discovery of ?

Student 1: Discovery of my feelings through the words of the writer.

Researcher : Before we started the process of reading, discussing and writing process, I mean before you volunteered for the programme, I told you about the steps and details of the programme.

Student 1: Yes, I remember.

Researcher : What were initial fears before we started the process?

Student 1: I did not have fears about the study. I thought I could do the requirements of the study. Maybe because of you, I did not have fears, because I almost knew the nature of the study from last year. It was beneficial last year and I knew that this study would be beneficial, too. And because it was voluntary. I mean if something is voluntary, you may drop anytime you want, anytime you feel unsuccessful. I was only curious about the texts we would read. That is all.

Researcher : What things helped you to overcome the anxiety of starting a new thing? How did you evaluate yourself and conclude that you were successful? I asked this question because you said If you had felt unsuccessful, you would have dropped the programme.

Student 1: Yes. Your conclusion is right. I volunteered and continued because I felt successful. I learnt many things about the texts in the discussion sessions. I mean if I had two or three ideas about the text we read that day, in the discussion session these ideas were multiplied by the number of the group members. It was more like a group

work. We expressed our ideas and as a group we evaluated our ideas. If we managed to prove our ideas by using the evidence from the text and if other people also recognized those points that was success. And we worked on those ideas, improved and expanded them in the writing session.

Researcher : We had three steps in the study.

Student 1: Reading, discussing and writing.

Researcher : Yes, if we had omitted one of these step, for instance writing, what would this have changed?

Student 1: We could not express our ideas, we could not recognize our thought clearly, if the study had not included a writing step. If we had omitted the discussion session, we might not have explored so different perspectives because we would not have listened to our friends. The three together is more effective. We read, we discussed and had a wide range of ideas and improved these ideas through writing.

Researcher : Yes. I also thought that these three steps were compatible and completed each other.

Student 1: Yes. You were also a member of the study and brought many things to us. I hope we also had some positive impact on you (Laughs).

Researcher : (Laughs) Of course you did. Honestly, I got many different ideas about all of the texts. And most importantly, you gave invaluable data to our study both by responses and by interviews. Well, there is a criticism about the richness and quality in the essays, responses of the students. The criticism says the student writers lacks in creativity and effectiveness.

Student 1: I totally agree with this criticism. For example, watching or reading a work and writing a response cannot be efficient or creative. For example, our responses in

the department are only summaries. 40 responses out of 50 are summaries of the work. There is nothing in the name of criticism, creativity and reflection. These responses do not have any creative value as a text. Only summaries. You can find better summaries on the Internet; I do not see the point in writing another summary.

Researcher : The researchers say exactly what you said. The texts the student writers write cannot go beyond being crude summaries of the target reading texts. Crude paraphrases. What might be the reasons lying behind this inefficiency? What do you think?

Student 1: We do not integrate our real ideas and thoughts into the readings and writings. This is easier than the creative or reflective writing. But we are taken away from thinking because we are not expected to discuss raise arguments about the texts. We are given a text and expected to write a response about this text. This criticism is valid for the majority of the students in the department. I mean if we directly write something about a text without having a discussion about it, and if people receive low grades when they write their individual ideas and thoughts, people finally do not think and paraphrase the text, or go and visit web sites providing readymade essays. This is the natural outcome of such a system.

Researcher : But I thought reading especially literature triggers the thinking process, results in original creative works.

Student 1: But everything is fixed. I mean within these strict rules, and a fixed programme you do not feel you should think and write something original.

Researcher : Well, what is your impression of the grading mechanism and feedback? What are their effect on the thinking process, creativity ? What do you think?

Student 1: Well, in the department, I had very high grades from the responses I wrote, but this did not satisfy me. I felt no pleasure of success. I did not feel successful and did not write the last four responses of that lesson. The last four responses of the video lesson. Because I had nothing to write, we just watched the movies and plays and the instructor wanted us to write minimum 500 words for each play.

Researcher : A paragraph for each play ?

Student 1: Yes. A paragraph for each play. But what I was going to write within this paragraph? I quit writing responses of that course, I had high grades but I quit writing.

Researcher : What were you writing about before you quit writing? I mean within this 500 words paragraph, what were the things you were writing about?

Student 1: Just the summary of the play. Nothing individual, nothing creative. We did not think, we did not use imagination, creativity. We just tried to convince the instructor that we watched the play. I wrote about the writer's life, whether he was a romantic or realist, whether he was keen on his mother and hating his father or vice versa (Laughs)

Researcher : (Laughs). Well, ...

Student 1: If I had written my own ideas, these responses might have been better. At first, I was doing this, I mean I was discussing the theme of the play by myself.

Researcher : Did you write your ideas in those responses?

Student 1: No. I just discussed those ideas by myself and that was it. I wrote a summary of the play, as I think individual ideas were not demanded in those responses. But later I recognized that I could not continue those internal discussions, because I had nothing else to express them, improve them. And I got bored of summary writing and I quit writing.

Researcher : It was a reaction to ...

Student 1: a reaction to myself. Writing nothing is more logical than writing summaries.

Researcher : This will affect your grades.

Student 1: Yes, this will affect my grades, but I do not think that the grades are so important.

Researcher : Well, we did not have a grading mechanism, or system, whatever it is. We did not have a classification like good or bad. We did not have categories as true or false. This is really difficult, I mean without grading, classification without norms, it might turn out to be a chaos. What do you think?

Student 1: I do not think that I might be this willing to take part in this study, volunteer to be a member of the study, if there had been a grading system in your study. I do not think that I would succeed in full attendance. Three weeks, four weeks maximum. Grading is a highly formal issue. It is norm based. But in response writings, in literature, I do not think that anyone can be so certain about anything. So grading is futile, it does not have a firm base, but it act as if it has. Then people start to think, but under pressure. Pressure of being graded, classified under right or wrong. Trying to write something creative or reflective by keeping in mind that your response will be graded is not one of the enjoyable things that I desire to do. But in the study, we found our points and expressed our points and this was improvement for me. We acted freely. Knowing that none of the things we write would be wrong, we acted within a much wider scope. But if you had included a grading system, you would not possibly have had so many different perspectives. Summaries. All summaries.

Researcher : I see. I see.

Student 1: Last year we did a similar thing together. Reading, watching and discussing. We watched many different things together and this was voluntary. And I still remember the things we focused on in those discussions. I think this is due to the voluntary nature of the course. We were motivated, we were not forced.

Researcher : What do you think about the role of writing here? What would have changed, if we omitted writing step?

Student 1: In discussion we had the chance to express our ideas and thought and hear other people's ideas. It seems that we wrote what we focused on during the discussions, but it was not like that. The chain of ideas in discussions and the chain of ideas in writings were different. When we were having discussions the pace was really fast and an idea which might be very interesting and productive might be forgotten after two or three sentences because of the pace of the discussion. However, in writing it is not like that. You record everything and you can focus on all of them if you think it is valuable, it is more productive.

Researcher : The level of understanding is different in each step.

Student 1: Writing step is the most productive one. Because we can clearly see our ideas and add on those ideas. I have time to think on these ideas and explore more thoughts. I explore the things from the texts and I explore the things from my mind. In Lessing reading I experienced it more.

Researcher : What were the things you like most in the study? The appealing points of the study?

Student 1: The number of the participants is limited and that was good. We had time to discuss. I mean because the number is six, we could talk freely. And we were

drinking tea and having a break whenever we wanted. The control was in our hands. That was unusual at first but later I recognized its importance. We were choosing the discussion points, we were choosing the responses that we want to write, we were choosing the length of the discussions. We were to choose because it is our learning experience. Another element was the mild and sincere atmosphere of the class. I guess after we diminished the fear of failing or getting a low grade, we could truly integrate into the study, it was not like a reading and getting grade situation, more like a reading for the sake of reading, writing for the sake of writing situation. This sincere and relaxed atmosphere allowed us to think more freely. We had no limits and boundaries and we felt comfortable and no worries about the study, just read, think, discuss and write.

Researcher : So you say it was more like a reading and discussion club. Like a joint venture having no risks.

Student 1: Yes. We have already appointed for a reading club. And next term, we and five more people will officially start this reading club in the university. You can say that this study was the triggering factor here.

Researcher : Well, I am really happy to hear that. Do you think that there were negative or detrimental points in the study?

Student 1: No, I do not think there were. I mean we had the control over the study. So it is impossible for anyone to say it was detrimental. If it was detrimental people might have dropped it long ago. In a normal programme, grading pressurise everyone even the instructors, that is the weak side of a regular course. However, in this study we could use everything we thought and explored. I think there were no weak sides in it.

Researcher : Did you recognize any differences in your attitude towards literature, literary texts, reading or writing about them throughout the study?

Student 1: I certainly had wider perspective now. For example, the rudderless ship in Crane, I recognized that other writers and poets were also using similar themes. So every time I see this metaphor I see it from a different angle. I also want to use it in my own writing and add another dimension on it. So I started to have similarities with the writers, and my writing might be regarded as literary creation.

Researcher : Did it have a motivating effect on you to read more to pay more attention to literature?

Student 1: I found excellent description of my feelings in Lessing and I read the whole story. The excerpts we read together were like an entrance and because I saw something familiar I followed her. I found other short stories of her on the internet and planning to read them. But reading them with a group and discussing them might be more beneficial. Lessing is one example of it. Pinter was an inspiration to me. I mean his descriptions of the human emotions and thoughts were so attractive that you feel that this is the first scene you see in your life. And willingly or not, you want to see more, I mean read more.

Researcher : Did you recognize any improvements in your proficiency level in English?

Student 1: We learnt lots of new words and uses. We learnt something beyond the grammar. I mean I recognized that a simple sentence might express many different things. It was more about the writing style. We developed a writing style, an individual way of writing. This was more important than the vocabulary range, and grammar use. If we apply such a programme for two terms or more, I am sure that we will be very

competent in literary knowledge and language proficiency. This might not be possible in the department but as I told you we applied for an official reading club and you will be a member of the club. We might continue our reading, discussion and writing sessions within this club. Even though we only get familiar with the name of the writer and read a few things from him, this is more than enough for us. It is better than wandering around the same things again and again.

Researcher : Do you think that the study has any negative effects on the learners?

Student 1: I do not think so. The three sessions are already included in the regular educational system. Reading, discussing and writing. Not in the way that the study applies it, but these three elements are a part of the system.

Researcher : The reason why I asked that questions is that this programme does not have any grading mechanism. So Many people criticize this type of programmes because these programmes cannot classify the learners in the end. And people have negative attitudes towards these non-graded studies because of the lack of categorization methods.

Student 1: This categorization of successful and unsuccessful is the main thing that pushes the learners out of the learning environment. Because of this literature turns into an obligation. Perhaps, I did not understand the themes in one Basho poem, but had many ideas about Lessing's themes. Do you call me unsuccessful or successful? Where is the line? I think there is no line so grading is only an imaginary thing having no firm basis. This is for the literature. I do not think in literature teaching any grading system can be effectively used. In the video lesson, in the department we have the minimum 500 words limit. But what if I can express my thought with 300 words. I should write 200 more. This is I cannot understand. Basho expresses pages of feelings

and emotions within a simple sentence, are we going to give a low grade to him?

(Laughs)

Researcher : (Laughs) Yes. You can do the same thing. Express many things within a small paragraph or in a sentence. Well, do you think that this study changed your impression of literature and life?

Student 1: It has changed my impression. When I think of the texts we read in the department, they are limited in scope and themes. Their range is limited. But here reading texts focusing on the human nature, emotions, texts provoking thinking and creativity is the real thing we have to do. I felt really content with myself throughout the study, I am convinced that I am doing the things what anyone interested in literature should do. It also had an effect on the way I see life, because the analysis of these characters somehow changes the way you see yourself and the people around you, things become clearer.

Researcher : Do you have anything to add?

Student 1: I think we covered many things. It felt like a therapy.

Researcher : Very well. Thanks. I will inform you about the results.

Student 1: I will be happy to hear that. See you.

Researcher : See you.