SPEAKING PORTFOLIOS AS AN ALTERNATIVE WAY OF ASSESSMENT IN AN EFL CONTEXT

A MASTER'S THESIS

BY

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To my beloved husband and parents

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The examining committee appointed by The Graduate School of Education for the thesis examination of the MA TEFL student

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

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Teaching English as a Foreign Language.

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ABSTRACT

SPEAKING PORTFOLIOS AS AN ALTERNATIVE WAY OF ASSESSMENT IN AN EFL CONTEXT

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This thesis reports on research exploring students' and instructors' attitudes towards speaking portfolios with regard to certain advantages and disadvantages of these assessment tools at the tertiary level. The participants were 77 Turkish university students, five instructors and two administrators at an English preparatory program of a state university. At the end of one semester implementation of the Speaking Portfolio (SP), a questionnaire was administered to the students, and then five focal students, the instructors, and the program administrators were interviewed individually.

The findings revealed that all stakeholders have positive attitudes to the implementation in general. In particular, an improvement in the students' oral skills and self-reflection skills has been noted to be fostered through the use of the SP. While the stakeholders expressed their appreciation on these aspects, they also agreed that the SP increased the students' level of anxiety and that the SP did not largely promote the students' learner autonomy or motivation. The students and some instructors also thought that SP oral tasks were not authentic enough to fully reflect speaking skills. On some points there were discrepancies between the attitudes of the participants. Students did not see practicality as a big issue, whereas

it caused a problem on the part of the teachers. While students stated that they have benefitted from peer-feedback, the instructors and administrators did not report a major improvement in this aspect.

This study has enabled instructors, administrators, curriculum developers an alternative way to improve and assess speaking skills through speaking portfolios.

Key words: Speaking Portfolio, Oral Portfolio, Alternative Assessment, Video-recorded Portfolio, Speaking Assessment

ÖZET

YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENME ORTAMINDA ALTERNATİF BİR DEĞERLENDİRME YOLU OLAN KONUŞMA PORTFOLYOSU

Sibel Özdemir-Çağatay

Yüksek Lisans, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizce Öğretimi Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Yard. Doç. Dr. Julie Mathews-Aydınlı

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Bu tez üniversite seviyesinde öğrenci ve öğretim elemanlarının konuşma portfolyosunun avantaj ve dezavantajlarına ilişkin olarak tutumlarını inceleyen araştırmayı anlatmaktadır. Katılımcılar bir devlet üniversitesinin hazırlık programındaki 77 Türk üniversite öğrencisi, beş öğretim elemanı ve iki yöneticidir. Konuşma portfolyosunun bir dönemlik uygulamasından sonra, öğrencilere bir anket uygulanmıştır ve sonrasında beş odak öğrenci, öğretim elemanları ve program yöneticileriyle bireysel görüşmeler yapılmıştır.

Bulgular tüm katılımcıların genel olarak pozitif olduğunu açığa çıkarmıştır. Özellikle de, konuşma becerisinde ve öz değerlendirme becerisinde konuşma portfolyosu sayesinde bir gelişme olduğu bulunmuştur. Katılımcılar bu açılardan takdirlerini ifade ederken, konuşma portfolyosunun öğrencilerin endişe seviyesini artırdığı, öğrenen özerkliği ve motivasyonunu çok fazla artırmadığı konusunda da ortak fikre sahiplerdir. Öğrenciler ve bazı öğretim elemanları ayrıca konuşma portfolyosu için yapılan konuşmaların bu beceriyi tam anlamıyla yansıtmadığı için

gerçekçi olmadığını düşünmüşlerdir. Bazı noktalarda ise katılımcıların tutumlarında farklılıklar olmuştur. Öğrenciler pratikliği büyük bir sorun olarak görmezken, bu durum öğretmenler tarafından bir problem teşkil etmiştir. Bazı öğrenciler akran değerlendirmesinden faydalandığını ifade ederken, öğretim elemanları ve yöneticiler bu açıdan çok büyük bir gelişmeyi belirtmemişlerdir.

Bu çalışma öğretim elemanları, yöneticiler, müfredat geliştirenlere konuşma portfolyosu aracılığı ile konuşma becerisini ilerletmek ve değerlendirmek için alternatif bir yol sağlamıştır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Konuşma Portfolyosu, Alternatif Değerlendirme, Video kaydı ile Portfolyo, Konuşma Değerlendirmesi

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Just as the creative artist knows that the best art may arise from the note that was not played or the brush stroke that was not made, teachers may best serve students and themselves by knowing when to step back from traditional approaches to assessment and follow for learner-directed assessment (Alan & Pierson, 2000, p.105).

In recognition of the different styles each learner brings to the learning process, there has been a shift over the past two decades from standardized tests, mostly scored either by teachers or by machines, to alternative assessments. This change suggests that it could be more useful to involve students in the assessment process by giving them an opportunity to undertake some responsibilities for their own learning (Brown, 1998). Considering the benefit of involving students in the assessment process, many institutions are beginning to use portfolios as a tool of authentic assessment in congruent with their objectives, curricula, and instruction. Because of the differences in the instruction and the needs of each institution, researchers as well as practitioners have been unable to reach to an agreement on the ideal components or format of a portfolio (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). In the past, portfolios were prepared in paper form; however, as technology has become more integrated into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes, some universities have begun to include electronic portfolios and video and/or audio portfolios in their curricula to take advantage of these technological advances. This use of technology as an evaluator has been particularly true when it comes to improving language learners' oral skills (Wang & Chang, 2010).

Portfolios might focus on all four macro skills of language learners or aim to improve only one skill, such as in the case of oral portfolios. Oral portfolios are a relatively new assessment technique throughout the world, and Middle East Technical University (METU) is the first university in Turkey to start utilizing such portfolios. Thus, there is a need for empirical studies presenting more evidence on the potential advantages or disadvantages of these types of oral portfolios. The primary objective of this study is to analyze and present the attitudes of various stakeholders towards Speaking Portfolios (SPs) in an EFL context.

Key Terms

Oral Portfolios: Umbrella term for all the portfolios mentioned below to assess oral/ speaking skills. These can take different forms:

Technology-based portfolios: A broad term for all types of portfolios, including writing portfolios, which rely on technology for the collecting of students' works. However, in this study, only portfolios to assess oral skills through technology will be referred to. In such a portfolio, stakeholders could use technological tools such as computers, MP3 players, MP4 Players, tape-recorders, video cameras, and/or mobile phones.

Electronic portfolios (e-portfolios or digital portfolios): Learners use the Internet to upload their artifacts (products or any work) on four skills such as their writings, reading tasks, speaking tasks or their reflections on their performance. In this study, the researcher will refer to the e-portfolios used only for speaking skills.

Video portfolios: Learners are video-recorded to compose their artifacts and upload them onto a CD/DVD, a website, a computer or a mobile phone. They can upload their recorded speech and/or their self and peer reflections. Reflections could

be written on a paper or could be recorded on a videotape. Video cameras are used for this type of assessment.

Audio portfolios: Learners record their own voice and upload it onto a CD/DVD, a computer or a website. They can upload their speech and/or their self and peer-assessment (peer-feedback).Tape recorders, recording machines, MP3, MP4 players or mobile phones can be used for recording.

Speaking portfolios may include all the aforementioned ways; however, in this study speaking portfolios will be used interchangeably with video portfolios in the following way:

Speaking portfolio in this study: Students prepare their speeches in the classroom with a partner or in small groups, with or without the help of their teachers. Students perform the tasks orally and the teachers video-record students' speeches and upload them onto CDs/DVDs. The topics of these speeches are determined by the unit outcomes of the coursebook (see Appendix 4), so students use different checklists for each performance depending on the objectives of the unit (see Appendix 1). After ten unit performances, students write a self-reflection (see Appendix 2) outside the class based on the rubric (see Appendix 3) which the teachers also use to evaluate students' performance. In addition, students assess their peers' performances by giving feedback to them orally in the classroom and teachers grade students' performances as well as their written reflections.

Background of the Study

Constructivism, which has gained importance since the second half of the 20th century, offers a comprehensive theoretical framework for the design of learning settings. In such settings, learners become more active depending on their progress

with the help of a teacher. Today, while there is a shift from traditional to such student-centered learning, there also exist innovations in assessment procedures, including the change from summative assessment to formative assessment (Yurdabakan, 2011). Therefore, educational researchers have put more emphasis on multiple forms of assessment that are parallel to classroom goals, curricula, and instruction. Alternative assessments can take the form of oral interviews, story or text telling, writing samples, projects and exhibitions, experiments, demonstrations as well as portfolios (Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000). Portfolios, in particular, tend to incorporate all of these assessment forms as they are in line with the primary elements of constructivism such as learner ownership and reflection. Barrett and Wilkerson (2004) stated that "A portfolio, the purpose of which is to foster learning over time, is based upon a constructivist model" (p. 2). Also, O'Malley and Pierce (1996) attribute the idea of portfolios to social constructivism, which leads students to learn by constructing information about the world and by using their mental processes actively. To put it in another way, learning does not mean mere accumulation of basic skills but making use of multiple strategies and pathways to construct one's own progress and express that progress in a portfolio assessment (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Portfolios are used in a wide range of applications by educators, so there is little consensus on what they are, how they need to be used, or what the components are (Kılıç, 2009; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Portfolios were originally created as alternative assessment tools, especially for writing skills. However, Genesee and Upshur (1996) provide a comprehensive definition of portfolios as "a purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates to students and others their efforts, progress and achievements in given areas" (p. 99). This definition of portfolios

implies that they might also be used as a means of instruction for different skills; therefore some researchers view learners as active participants of not only the overall learning process but also the assessment process. In order to involve learners in their own assessment, Little (2007) points out that they need to be a part of the process of determining their aims and selecting their activities. They also need to reflect on their own progress using their target language in line with the concepts of internalization and Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978), so that they could become more autonomous. Little (2007) defined "learner autonomy" in terms of "reflective involvement in planning, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating learning" (p.153). This definition clearly shows that students need to be able to evaluate their own performance throughout the organizing, applying, monitoring, and assessment phases (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

The empirical studies conducted in both ESL and EFL contexts report that all kinds of portfolios contribute to learners in a variety of aspects: they provide the instruction with a link to assessment; and foster learner autonomy, self-assessment skills, self-monitoring, motivation and self-confidence (Castañeda and Rodríguez-González, 2011; Ceylan, 2006; Yılmaz, 2010). They also enable learners to see gaps in their own learning and to take some risks (Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000). Moreover, they promote learner-centered practice in a collaborative environment, and help increase learning rather than to rank or punish students (O' Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Although portfolios seem to be a blessing not only for students but also for teachers in an EFL context, they might pose some challenges for both parties, such as workload, time constraints, subjectivity, practicality, portability, and compatibility (Kılıç, 2009; Kocoğlu, Akyel & Erçetin, 2008; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996; Oskay, Schallies, & Morgil, 2008). Brown (2004) proposed that institutions need to pay

extra attention to the development and the application of portfolios to eliminate these drawbacks.

In the last two decades, with the advances in technology, computers or video cameras have increasingly taken the place of paper portfolios, especially in oral assessments. Therefore, some research has dwelled on the use of technology-based portfolios for the evaluation of speaking performance, using for example, tape recorders, video recordings, and digital recordings on computers. This research revealed there were advantages and disadvantages of oral portfolios. To illustrate, Brooks (1999) used video tape recordings to improve and assess learners' oral as well as their reflective skills. She alleged that the assessment of oral skills plays an important role in monitoring second or foreign language (L2) speaking development. Also, in her study, she concluded that videotaping is a practical and informative way of assessing students and giving them an opportunity for self-assessment (Brooks,1999). Similar to Brooks' (1999) findings, Castañeda and Rodríguez-González (2011) carried out a similar study on video portfolios. The conclusions drawn from this recent study indicated that the use of video portfolios could promote learners' performance in speaking to a great extent and this authentic way of assessing could boost self-awareness and motivation for their own performance (Castañeda and Rodríguez-González (2011). On the other hand, in Wang and Chang's (2010) study, the findings did not clearly reveal any finding with respect to the effectiveness of speaking portfolios on learners' speaking performance and anxiety. All these studies shed light on the use of technology in speaking classes and as part of assessment procedures, while suggesting that there still remains a need for an in-depth exploration of the advantages and the disadvantages of using video recorded speaking portfolios.

Statement of the Problem

University preparatory programs all over the world are increasingly implementing curricula entailing the use of portfolios as an assessment technique, a topic that has been studied by a great number of researchers (e.g. Ekmekçi, 2006; Lynch, & Shaw, 2005; McDonald, 2011; Samancıoğlu, 2006; Şahinkarakaş, 1998; Shay, 1997; Smith & Tillemma, 2003; Türkkorur, 2005; Yılmaz, 2010). However, these studies have been limited to a primary focus on either writing skills specifically, or on the European Language Portfolio (ELP) as a whole. Meanwhile, the use of oral portfolios has been under-emphasized in EFL research. While a few researchers have looked into the effectiveness of video portfolios (Brooks, 1999; Wang & Chang, 2010) and students' attitudes to oral portfolios (Bolliger, & Shepherd, 2010; Castañeda, & Rodríguez-González, 2011; Danny Huang & Alan Hung, 2010), these studies have not taken instructors' attitudes into consideration. Also, these studies have not revealed a comprehensive and consistent description of the advantages and disadvantages of these assessment tools. As suggested by Sezgin (2007), when there are adaptations or innovations in the curriculum, it is important to examine all stakeholders' attitudes since their reactions determine how they will facilitate the process of change. Hence, there is a need to investigate not only the students' but also the instructors' attitudes towards this relatively new assessment tool -speaking portfolios- and particularly, their advantages and disadvantages in assessing students' oral performance.

Portfolios have been in use in EFL classes for different skills, but there still exists a need to provide empirical evidence on their possible advantages and disadvantages. In particular, of the four skills in language learning, speaking is the most difficult for teachers to measure, especially when using traditional assessment

methods such as achievement exams (Chang, Wu & Ku, 2005). However, the potential difficulties of assessing speaking such as subjectivity, or affective problems like anxiety and motivation, might be overcome through self, peer, and co-feedback using technology-based portfolios (Castañeda & Rodríguez-González, 2011). Another major problem with oral skills is that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching often lacks a real, authentic environment to support speaking opportunities in the target language (Chang et al., 2005). In Turkey, teachers as well as students experience the same aforementioned difficulties. To address these problems, an enhanced performance assessment through oral portfolios has been recommended to provide teachers with an alternative method for evaluating learners' speaking skills (Chang et al., 2005 ; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Therefore, the present study aimed to address the following research question:

Research Question

1. What are stakeholders' (students', instructors', administrators') attitudes towards speaking portfolios as an alternative form of assessment in tertiary level EFL classes?

Significance of the Study

Recently, the literature has offered inadequate findings about all types of oral portfolio use from the perspective of students. There seems to be a need, therefore, for a more in-depth look at the full experience of using speaking portfolios, from students' as well as other stakeholders' perspectives, to try and understand how and why those contradictory results might be developing. In an attempt to further the previous research, the motive of this study will be to examine and present a current picture of not only Turkish preparatory students' but also instructors' and

administrators' attitudes towards speaking portfolios. This may add a new dimension to the current literature by presenting, from a wide variety of perspectives, the positive and negative sides of using video recordings to assess students' speaking performances. Thus, the findings of this study might help resolve the inconclusiveness and strengthen the argument for or against the use of these portfolios in different educational settings.

At the local level, the study is expected to provide administrators and instructors with up- to-date information on a possible way of conducting oral assessment. Therefore, exploring the different stakeholders' opinions on speaking portfolios might provide EFL lecturers, program designers, and test developers with greater insights into alternative assessment, materials, and curriculum change for speaking skills, especially at the tertiary level. Furthermore, implementing speaking portfolios could perhaps enable the learners to prepare themselves for undertaking the responsibilities of not only their own but also their peers' learning process to become life-long learners, which could be a valuable course of action to take in the Turkish educational system (Karabıyık, 2008). These portfolios could also enable students to collect, store and manage their artifacts in a relatively easy and efficient manner compared with their paper based counterparts (Chang et al., 2005; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Such an assessment resting upon authentic spoken language seems to position learners in a more active role and give different responsibilities to the teachers (Castañeda, & Rodríguez-González, 2011). In essence, when the apparent lack of appropriate speaking assessments is considered, analyzing the advantages and disadvantages of speaking portfolios as an oral assessment technique by referring to how they are perceived by the students and instructors may illuminate the way towards preparation of successful oral assessments.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed to introduce this study by presenting a statement of the problem, the research questions, and the significance of the study. Moreover, the overall framework of the literature review was presented. The next chapter will review the relevant literature in more detail. In the third chapter, the methodology including the setting, participants, instruments, data collection methods, and procedures will be described. The data collected through quantitative and qualitative ways will be analyzed and reported in the fourth chapter. Finally, the fifth chapter will discuss the findings, pedagogical implications, limitations of the study, and suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Portfolios have been used as an alternative assessment for the last few decades, so they have received attention from researchers with both their attractions and drawbacks. In fact, with the increasing importance of speaking English, oral portfolios designed to empower speaking skills have gained great interest in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. Therefore, in order to make best use of video-recorded oral portfolios, it is better to gain detailed insights into the stakeholders' attitudes towards them.

The aim of this study is to examine the implementation of the speaking portfolio from the perspective of students, instructors, and administrators at a Turkish university preparatory school. In particular, it is an attempt to identify the particular advantages and disadvantages that stakeholders see in Speaking Portfolios (SPs).

This chapter has a number of different sections. It reviews the literature in the field, which covers the shift from the theoretical framework of behaviorism in education to the one in constructivism, the change from standard tests to alternative assessment, different types of alternative assessments, and specific research on portfolios focusing on common advantages and disadvantages. The improvement of speaking skills and their assessment via oral portfolios will also be discussed. In the last part, the empirical studies on oral portfolios will be presented.

Behaviorism in Learning and Testing

In the 1940s-50s, behaviorism was a very influential psychological theory (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Proponents of behaviorism theory hypothesized that in order for people, especially children, to learn, three phases of conditioning need to take place in the learning environment (Harmer, 2004): stimulus, response, and reinforcement. When people are provided with the same behavior (stimulus) at certain times with a sign of appreciation or praise (reinforcement), they learn or produce (responses) whatever they are exposed to (stimulus). Since these people imitate the behavior of the other person, it is highly possible that they reproduce whatever they see, hear or observe (stimulus) at another time to get the same reward. This only happens on the condition that they are provided with a desirable incentive (or reinforcement) (Harmer, 2004; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). This kind of learning through observations as well as reinforcements brings about automatic or conditioned stimuli-response interaction after a repeated period of time. In fact, whenever the learner is exposed to the same behavior with reinforcement, s/he is likely to realize the expected or presented action (Harmer, 2004; Lightbown & Spada, 2006). Thus, this theory implied that learners are passive receivers of information and regards every learner as the same without considering the individual or contextual differences.

Behaviorists view learning as an observable change in learners' behavior in terms of assessment. If the learner first responds incorrectly to a test item but can respond to the same stimulus correctly later on, they believe that learning has taken place because of the change. Behaviorist researchers also claim that it is better to

quantify the change by assigning a number, so the change can be evaluated or assessed (Mabry, 1999). With regard to this theoretical framework, in the early 1900s, Robert Thorndike emphasized the value of using testing, especially in measuring aptitude (as cited in Cole, Ryan, Kick & Mathies, 2000). In the 1920s and 30s, standard tests gained importance in education. These kinds of tests were quite popular among educators as they provide numerical and objective data to compare students and give quick results (Johnson & Rose, 1997). Anderson (1998) also listed the basic features of traditional tests as follows:

- assumes knowledge has universal meaning: knowledge has the same meaning for all individuals everywhere
- treats learning as a passive process: the aim of teaching is to fill in students' minds regardless of their prior knowledge
- separates process from products: the final outcomes of students' learning process is tested as these products are assumed to be representative of the process
- focuses on mastering discrete, isolated bits of information: students achieve one low level of skill before moving onto another one
- assumes the purpose of assessment is to document the learning: one of the aims is to rank and classify students for future reference
- believes that cognitive abilities are separated from affective and conative abilities: the primary concern is students' cognitive abilities tested at one time

- views assessment as objective, value free and neutral: facts and entities are distinct and measurable constructs
- embraces a hierarchical model of power on the part of teachers: instructors are the only power to teach and assess students (p. 8).

Anderson (1998) emphasized that the features of such a behaviorism-based assessment model were criticized by educationalists in the past few decades. In particular, he notes that the traditional way of instruction aims to teach students truths by transmitting knowledge and assess whether they have learned these truths by testing their performance at specific times. Thus, in the assessment phase of such an instruction type, evaluation of student learning is primarily based on objective tests, in which students do not need to use higher level thinking skills such as reflection and feedback (Anderson, 1998). O'Malley and Pierce (1996) made further counter-arguments for the objective tests. They believed that standard tests failed to foster the development of thought processes, cooperative learning, or decision making skills. In addition, with these tests, students cannot integrate learning with real life experiences as they view learning as discrete items, and teachers cannot keep track of students' progress as they just focus on the product (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Moreover, the affective side of individual differences is ignored as these assessments try, and often claim, to be objective and neutral. Lastly, the proponents of standard tests regard teachers as an authority rather than a support, which also may lead to some affective defects on the part of students (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Johnson and Rose (1997) also claimed that the supremacy of standard tests has been questioned by educationalists for the reliability problem. Namely, they are just indicators showing how well learners took the test on a given day or how well students took the information as it was, but not how well those students progressed

(Johnson and Rose, 1997). Finally, the problems with testing students at one shot lent a way to different types of assessment with the introduction of constructivism.

Constructivism in Learning and Assessment

In recent years, constructivism has appeared as an alternative paradigm to behaviorism, and has played a role in the development of pedagogical changes (Yurdabakan, 2011). This approach has received considerable attention in education since it is viewed as a "natural, relevant, productive and empowering framework" (Büyükduman & Şirin, 2010, p.1). The idea of constructivism was put forward in the field of psychology, but it has also implications for the field of education (Anderson, 1998). For example, constructivist educationalists describe the learning process as:

> Each person constructs his or her knowledge base, interpreting new information against a background of personal experience, values and prior knowledge. What a person knows might be described as a mental organization of cognitive schemata, similar to a filing system with routines for retrieving and processing information. From this perspective, education is not changing a student's response to a stimulus but rather arranging conditions so the student can understand and remember new information and can construct and connect schemata.(Mabry, 1999, p. 7)

It seems from the quote that learning takes place based on the individual learners' experience in connecting schemata and the educationalists' role here is to design the settings for the learners to build up their own knowledge by resting upon their personal experiences or values. In essence, constructivists pay great attention to the individual needs and do not see learners as the same individuals in the learning process (Stefanakis, 2002).

Piaget (1955) and Vygotsky (1978) generated the idea of constructivism, but there seems to be a slight difference between these two theorists. Piaget (1955) based the constructivist approach on cognitive development and individual construction; whereas, Vygotsyky (1978) advanced the theory to a more social dimension, in which students' learning and thinking are socially constructed and enhanced through parents, peers, teachers, and others around them in the community. Vygotsky's (1978) term, Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the distance between what a learner can do with assistance and what s/he can accomplish without any help, embodies the social aspects in that all stakeholders provide guidance to the learners so as to help them reach their potential. Therefore, scaffolding or coaching learners through giving feedback becomes central to the construction of learning in addition to learners' self-monitoring and reflection (Kaufman, 2004 & Yurdabakan, 2011). To put it another way, learners construct their own process and learn at their own pace by the help of teachers, parents, peers, or other people in the community as opposed to there just being one way of getting information from the teachers as in behaviorist approaches. Because of this social dimension of learning, the "Vygotskian perspective" on learning is sometimes labeled as socioconstructivism (Kaufman, 2004, p.305).

There are differences between how learning is conceived in constructivism and behaviorism. In constructivist settings, learners are viewed as constructers of information about the world by actively using their metacognitive skills (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). They are active processors of information through the guidance received from the environment. According to some researchers (Anderson, 1998; Kaufman, 2004; Yurdabakan, 2011) constructivism in education has its roots in cognitive and social notions. This theoretical framework promotes cognitive

development as well as individual construction of knowledge (Kaufman, 2004) with affective aspects while behaviorism merely focuses on the observable side of learners (Yurdabakan, 2011). Constructivism implies that learners determine their own pace and content of knowledge, so instead of accessing the 'truth' as suggested by behaviorists, every person goes on a different path of learning (Anderson, 1998). At this point, teachers assume the roles of guides, facilitators, and scaffolders instead of being the transmitters of information or authority figures (Anderson, 1998). What is more about constructivism, the learning context involves the learners' views and take actions based on their individual differences, interests, or affective needs (Yurdabakan, 2011).

While constructivism is primarily concerned with the learning process, but not specifically with grading, it has implications for instructors who employ more non-traditional approaches for assessment (Büyükduman & Şirin, 2010). The constructivist approaches support alternative assessment as opposed to traditional standard tests, which rest upon the positivist and behaviorist way of assessing (Anderson, 1998).

Alternative Assessments

In recognition of the disadvantages reported by some researchers to exist in standard tests, and drawing on notions of constructivism, issues such as individual differences (Mabry, 1999), multiple intelligences (Stefanakis, 2002) and a variety of learning styles (Stefanakis, 2002) have started to be taken into consideration in grading and assessment over the last three decades. However, such moves have brought about some modifications in classroom dynamics. Rust, O'Donovan and Price (2010) proposed that these changes from behaviorist approaches to

constructivist ones have shifted the roles of teachers and given more opportunity to the learners to build upon their own knowledge depending on their own experience. Anderson (1998) also emphasized that teachers have relinquished some of their control and have begun to hold a more democratic stance in and outside the classroom. Thus, teaching and assessing students in such a context have been regarded as alternatives to the traditional teacher and student roles. The terms 'alternative' assessments, 'authentic' assessments, and 'performance-based' assessments are sometimes used interchangeably (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). However, O'Malley and Pierce (1996) make a slight distinction between alternative assessment and authentic assessment; the former being a broader term while the latter is specifically related to the authenticity or to what extent the tasks are real-life like. Alternative assessment describes multiple forms of evaluation that reflect student learning, achievement, motivation and attitude to classroom activities (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). In both, students not only complete or demonstrate desired behaviours (Baron & Boschee, 1995) but also achieve them in real-life contexts rather than just by answering a question (Cole et al., 2000). While performance-based assessment is used "when test takers are asked to perform or demonstrate skills either by doing something that is observed and evaluated as it occurs" (Mabry, 1999, p.17). Based on these definitions, alternative assessment incorporates the other two assessment labels (authentic and performance-based) and will be used as the general term in this study to refer to all kinds of alternative assessment.

Alternative assessment attempts to achieve multi-dimensional goals regarding what each student has learned (Cole et al., 2000). It has been argued to have overwhelming advantages as it empowers learning, relates to curriculum outcomes

(Cole et al., 2000), promotes higher level thinking (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996), assumes knowledge has multiple meanings, treats learning as an active process, emphasizes both process and product, makes a connection between cognitive and affective abilities of learners (Anderson, 1998), and considers individual differences and multiple intelligences (Mabry, 1999). However, Baron and Boschee (1995) list the downsides of alternative assessments as the high cost, the possibility of subjectivity in marking results, and the difficulty in demonstrating the validity and reliability of the results.

Types of authentic assessments include but are not limited to; story or text telling, experiments, demonstrations, oral interviews, writing samples, projects and exhibitions (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996; Baron & Boschee, 1995); journals, conferences, logs (Brown, 1998); profiles, performance tasks, simulations (Mabry, 1999); activity checklists, concept mapping and portfolios (Baron & Boschee, 1995; Brown, 1998; Mabry, 1999; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). All of these assessment types share certain features for learners, such as their self-monitoring, self-assessment and co-assessment skills, thus they all consider students' individual differences and contribute to their higher order thinking skills (Brown, 2004). Of all the ways of alternative assessment, portfolios arguably stand out as the most comprehensive, since they may include the other types of alternative assessments as their components (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

An Alternative Assessment: Portfolios

Portfolio development and assessment are in alignment with current learning theories in regard to diversity in pace, learning styles, and cognitive development of

students (Anderson, 1998; Baron & Boschee, 1995; Yurdabakan, 2011). Because of these aspects, portfolios establish a powerful setting for individualistic learning.

People attribute different meanings to portfolios considering the particularity of the learning needs in their own contexts (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Mabry (1999) defined portfolios as "a collection of information by and about a student to give a broader view of his/her achievement" (p.17). Tierney, Carter, and Desai (1991) also suggested that "portfolios are collections of both teachers and students' work and it is a commitment to student involvement in self-evaluation and helping students to become aware of their own development as readers and writers" (p. 41). Similar to what Mabry (1999) and Tierney et al. (1991) proposed, Baron and Boschee (1995) also highlighted the same points by defining the portfolio as "consist[ing] of collections of students' works that provide tangible evidence of their knowledge, abilities and academic progress in relation to established outcomes" (p. 67).

Along with these definitions of portfolios, a number of different portfolio types have also been described. In a general sense, Tierney et al. (1991) categorize the different types as "process" and "product portfolios." In process portfolios, students need to collect their artifacts (works or products) over a period of time, get feedback, and then revise those works when necessary to develop their own performance, while in product portfolios they simply collect their work or performance outcomes and are graded based on these products (Tierney et al., 1991). O'Malley and Pierce (1996) also classified portfolios into three groups. The first group is called showcase portfolios, in which students display their best works to the school or the teacher. The second type of portfolio is collection portfolios, in which students include all their artifacts, so that they provide evidence of both process and products, but they are not carefully planned and organized for a specific reason. The

third type of portfolio is named as assessment portfolios. Unlike the previous types, they focus on systematic collections of student work, learners' self- reflection, self-assessment and teacher assessment. For the assessment portfolios, students need to put all their products to show their progress in relation to the fulfillment of the objectives set beforehand (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). In general, the assessment portfolios are regarded as product portfolios; however, they can also be used as a process portfolio by allowing students to revise their works (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Purpose of Portfolios

Portfolios' aims also change in relation to their different types. The overall purposes of portfolios are to allow students to display their works representing their interests and abilities and to document of their performances (Baron & Boschee, 1995). In addition, there are some aims that could be attributed to specific types of portfolios. For example, the purpose of the process portfolios could be to assess students' sustained works, to provide a window into the learners' mind and teachers' teaching (Stefanakis, 2002), and to monitor students' progress (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). When it comes to the product portfolios, the goal might be to keep track of students' sustained works (Tierney et al., 1991) and to encourage the improvement of qualities such as ability to effectively self-evaluate (Yurdabakan, 2011). Sometimes, the aims of assessment portfolios could be related to both process and product portfolios by linking assessment and teaching to learning in order to engage students in assessing process (Cole et al., 2000). Lastly, the aim of the showcase portfolios could be to let students show their work reflecting their special interests and abilities (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Depending on the primary aims of the institutions, the components of portfolio change in different contexts.

The next section will present the most widely used elements of portfolios mentioned in the literature.

Portfolio Components

Some common key elements of portfolios including students' works and assessment components are reported by the researchers (Baron & Boschee, 1995; Mabry, 1999; O' Malley & Pierce, 1996; Yurdabakan, 2011). Portfolios might be composed of various types of students' works such as narrative descriptions (Yurdabakan, 2011), essays, letters, projects, journal pages and entries, sketches, drawings, and observational records (Baron & Boschee, 1995). Portfolios might also include audial or visual records of presentations, demonstrations, official records (Brown, 2004; Mabry, 1999), poetry and creative prose, artwork, photos, newspaper or magazine clippings, written homework exercises, notes on lecture (Brown, 2004), snapshots, computer work and unit work (Cole et al., 2000). Apart from the aforementioned students' works, components related to evaluation could be added in to the portfolios. To illustrate, student reflections and self-evaluations, peer-evaluations, and feedback sheets (Yurdabakan, 2011) evidence of content area proficiency, indications of academic and social growth (Baron & Boschee, 1995), comments and checklists (Brown, 2004) could be included in all types of portfolios, but mostly in assessment portfolios. In these portfolios, traditional exam results could also be added to follow students' progress as it is not common to document exam scores with their feedback as a whole (Baron & Boschee, 1995).

Not every portfolio must necessarily include all of these items. The purposes as well as the conceptualization of the portfolio play a pivotal role in the types and contents of portfolios that an institution chooses to implement. At minimum, though, it is the teachers' or the institutions' responsibility to offer a chance for learners to

choose their works and customize their portfolios to their needs and interests (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

In the present study, the SP implementation, which can be categorized as a combination of a product or assessment portfolio, will be examined in detail based on the perceived advantages and disadvantages of these assessment tools. When it comes to the aim of the SP in the present study, the main objective is to assess students' speaking performances at intervals and link assessment and teaching/learning by involving students in the assessment process. Therefore, students need to put all their video-recordings into their portfolios as their products, with their reflections and the teachers' grading sheets as the assessment components to be evaluated at the end of the semester. This particular portfolio cannot be categorized as a process portfolio, as it does not require students to make revisions on their works nor do students put their works into their folders in a process. Students are assessed and their works are evaluated on the basis of criteria, which means that the SP can be regarded as a product/ assessment portfolio.

Benefits of Portfolios

Congruent with the benefits of alternative assessments, assessment portfolios have also been argued to offer potential advantages to the learners (Castañeda and Rodríguez-González ,2011; Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000; Johnson & Rose, 1997; Juwah, 2007; Kılıç, 2009). Learner autonomy, self-reflection, peer assessment, and motivation are frequently underlined as the attractions of portfolios in the current literature.

Learner autonomy. One of the major advantages of assessment portfolios is student authority or ownership caused by the requirement to review their works in their portfolios (Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000). Little (2009) defined learner autonomy

by stating that autonomous language learners undertake responsibility for their own learning and are able to regulate themselves by adapting themselves, setting goals, and planning their own learning process. Likewise, according to Johnson and Rose (1997), portfolios enable learners to take charge of their learning. When learners are required to reflect on what they have been taught or presented or in what ways they have learned, they start to regard learning as being within their control. The researchers further note that empowering learners to be responsible for their learning could contribute to their motivation as the elements "choice, self-evaluation and ownership" boost their confidence to select what they present at best (Johnson & Rose, 1997, p.11). Hence, the students view the portfolio as their property, which also fosters learner autonomy (Tierney et al., 1991).

There are some empirical studies on learner autonomy through portfolio implementation. For instance, Büyükduman and Şirin (2010) looked into the relationship between constructivism and learner autonomy through the use of learning portfolios (LP) at the tertiary level. In the LPs used in their study, the tasks were based on four macro skills; reading, listening, writing and speaking, as well as vocabulary. In Büyükduman and Şirin's (2010) research, 60 upper intermediate level students at a private university in Turkey were given a questionnaire. The findings indicated that students still needed the instructor's guidance at the initial stages of using LPs. However, towards the end of the implementation, students started to become responsible for their own learning, though still with some help from the teacher (Büyükduman and Şirin, 2010). This study shows that though portfolios are tools intended to assist in learner autonomy in educational settings, there might be some resistance or other barriers preventing its promotion (Büyükduman & Şirin, 2010).

Learner autonomy is the umbrella term incorporating both self-assessment and reflection (Kılıç, 2009). That is, when learners take control over their learning, they can become more autonomous. In the learning process, if the learners reflect on their performance and assess themselves, they can easily take the ownership of their learning (Kılıç, 2009). Little (2009) pointed out the same by emphasizing that self assessment is a central way to foster autonomy. Therefore, in the following section, self reflection and assessment will be discussed in detail.

Self- assessment and reflection. *"Without self-assessment, portfolios become merely another storage area for student work"* (Johnson and Rose, 1997, p.76).

Anderson (1998) stated that because of the shift from the hierarchical model of traditional tests to a more shared model of alternative assessments, including portfolios, there also exists a change in evaluating students' performance. One of the ways to this evaluation is to have students assess themselves. Self-assessment is defined as a method where students evaluate themselves according to criteria determined by the teacher or the students (Yurdabakan, 2011). While assessing themselves, students could also reflect on their own performance to evaluate it in alternative assessments (Boud, 1999). Reflection or self-reflection involves processing learners' own experiences by discovering their own understanding of what and why they are doing and the effect of it on themselves (Boud, 1999). Self-assessment and reflection overlap to a great extent, so they are used interchangeably at some points (Boud, 1999). According to Boud (1999), the major difference between these two terms is that self-assessment puts an emphasis on what has been achieved and reflection encompasses the ideas on to what extent the work has been done and how it could be improved. In other words, while reflection stresses the

thinking process of both strengths and weaknesses and what to be done in the future, self-assessment deals with what has been displayed so far (Boud, 1999).

Self-assessment as well as reflection lead to the construction of learner autonomy. Stafanakis (2002) related learner autonomy to self assessment by noting that portfolios foster reflective learning which may develop as self-regulation or autonomy. Paris and Ayres (1994) highlighted the importance of student self-assessment in making students self-regulated and active learners. They proposed that self-regulated(autonomous) learners choose their goals and work on different tasks, adapt the difficulty in the tasks they choose, are aware of how to use the available sources, establish meaning and evaluate and analyze their behavior in ways that promote further effort also reflect upon their performance (Paris & Ayres, 1994). This path implies that self assessment and reflection are the last steps towards achieving learner autonomy but they need to be existing throughout the whole process of learning (Cole et al., 2000). Cole et al. (2000) also regarded reflection as a way of self-growth and state that should learners begin reflecting and self-assessing at an early age, they could achieve all the aforementioned steps of self- regulation. In this way, learners could improve to “construct their own knowledge, “map their route” and “check their progress” (O’Malley & Pierce, p. 38).

In addition to fostering autonomy, self-assessment and reflection offer other benefits on the assessment process. Brown (1998) emphasized some of these advantages as being easily integrated into the language teaching, providing personalized or individualized assessment, assessing the process rather than the product, involving students in the assessment process, and possibly increasing students’ motivation.

Teachers or institutions have started to make use of reflection and self-assessment as part of their curriculum considering the positive sides, but such a change in assessment might cause difficulties on the part of both teachers and students (Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000). For instance, Juwah (2007) discovered the challenges of reflection and self-assessment while using portfolios. The source of data in his study was composed of 30 university students' portfolios, entries in participants' teaching logs, and online reflections (Juwah, 2007). The records of peer observations of teaching, participants' responses to course evaluation questionnaires and responses from the focus group with seven mentors were also used. Juwah's (2007) findings showed that portfolios promote reflective skills with the help of constructive feedback; however, they pose some challenges on the instructors as well as students in terms of critical thinking, open-ended reflection and subjectivity in self -reflection. Brown (1998) noted another problem that the scores given to their own performance or the assessment, itself, might be unreliable. Yurdabakan (2011) indicated a similar problem that higher level students tend to underestimate their performance while lower level students give higher scores to their work. Therefore, in order to avoid these potential problems, practitioners need to consider some key elements for self- assessment (Yurdabakan, 2011). First, students need support at the beginning of the portfolio implementation, but after some training they should be independent assessors of their own performance (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Second, they need to be encouraged to monitor, reflect upon, assess and evaluate their own achievements, learning strategies, progress, products and efforts (Tierney et al., 1991). Cole et al. (2000) also suggested that both teachers and students look back on what has been accomplished and act on it, then the students can start to reflect and this reflection will guide the students to take an action. Johnson and Rose (1997)

made some recommendations for teachers such as engaging the learners in assessment slowly, focusing on a limited number of areas, trying different approaches to fit into the individual needs and making a regular plan for the assessment.

Peer-assessment (Peer-feedback or Peer-evaluation). Another advantage portfolios offer is the possibility of promoting collaboration within the classroom. Collaborative assessment may be achieved through peer-assessment or peer-feedback (Johnson & Rose, 1997; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). According to Brown (1998), "Peer assessments are any assessments that require students to judge the language or language performance of one or more other students" (p. 54). In this way, students can understand others' perceptions of their own performance.

Many researchers (Brown, 1998; Johnson & Rose, 1997; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996; Yurdabakan, 2011) agree on the advantages of peer-assessment or peer-feedback ranging from developing metacognitive abilities, empowering communication skills, allowing teachers to evaluate more than one student at a time, boosting students' confidence in their work, giving students an opportunity to appreciate their peers' works, and providing a collaborative environment requiring little time or resources. The most striking benefit of peer-assessment is to provide different perspectives for students (Anderson, 1998). The challenges posed by peer - assessment include such issues as subjectivity, unreliability, and also interpersonal problems among students. To overcome these problems, teachers may set criteria together with the students, so that they feel more involved and will try to meet the standards (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996; Yoshida, 2001).

Johnson and Rose (1997) provided points to get the utmost benefit out of peer-assessment and some remedies for the possible problems. First, teachers need to

pay attention to the atmosphere in the classroom to promote peer-feedback. Second, teachers need to model appropriate behavior regarding sensitivity and respect for the interaction of students. More importantly, teachers should set the groundwork for peer evaluation by going over the meaning of evaluation, the rationale of it and in what ways it could be done (Johnson & Rose, 1997). Stefanakis (2002) also noted that teachers need to draw the students' attention to considering multiple intelligences and the possible differences between the learners when they become co-learners. That is, learners could help each other to learn the subject matter but teachers need to promote this collaboration by pointing out the potential differences between the individuals in the classroom.

Yurdabakan (2011) emphasized some requirements for students. To begin with, students need to be able to evaluate their own performance well in order to do peer evaluation successfully; furthermore, they need to work collaboratively, participate actively, and also take charge of responsibilities. In portfolio assessment, it is significant to sustain communication between both the students and the teacher so that they could develop close relationships and create a more collaborative environment (Yoshida, 2001).

Motivation. In educational settings, one of the most complex problems is motivation. Reversely, motivation may serve as a key to success. Motivation plays a critical role in language learning either positively or negatively (Brown, 2001). Harmer (2004) basically defined motivation as "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something" (p. 51). Most researchers agreed on two basic types of motivation: intrinsic and extrinsic (Brown, 2001; Harmer, 2004). Intrinsic motivation refers to universal human needs, such as competence, relatedness, and autonomy (Van Lier, 1996). To illustrate, some people

learn a language and seek challenges while learning or some might seek motivation for a tool to communicate with people (Ehrman, 1995). Extrinsic motivation represents human behavior in order to access an outside reward such as money, a prize, good grades, and positive feedback (Brown, 2001). Most of the research is in favor of intrinsic motivation, as extrinsic motivation is believed to have a relatively detrimental effect on the intrinsic one (Van Lier, 1996).

When it comes to assessment in language classes, traditional evaluation does not attach importance to the affective side of learners such as fostering motivation or decreasing the anxiety of the learners (Anderson, 1998). However, portfolios as alternative assessments are assumed to be motivating in the learning process. According to O'Malley and Pierce (1996), portfolios promote involvement in learning, integration of cognitive abilities along with motivation, and the importance of attitudes towards learning in an educational context. Baron and Boschee (1995) also allege that while using portfolios, having the control over learning, making personal relevance, and taking responsibility for the learning increase students' motivation; in contrast, product-based assessment such as objective tests generally decrease motivation and cause anxiety on the part of students. Johnson and Rose (1997) pinpoint the same idea. They state that people become intrinsically motivated when the tasks assigned to them are meaningful. Johnson and Rose (1997) believe that when learners are permitted to set goals, plan their own learning and reach their goals then meet their cognitive and emotional requirements, they enjoy the process more. Anderson (1998) found if learners are more engaged, they make more effort and spend more time on their work, as a result obtaining the greatest benefit. Incorporating all the points portfolios seem to pave the way for intrinsic motivation.

Portfolios do not only play an important role in learner autonomy, self-reflection or motivation but they could also give rise to certain obstacles in assessment process.

Downsides of Portfolios

Despite their often proposed benefits, portfolios might cause problems for not only students but also for teachers. As Johnson and Rose (1997) stated, when portfolio implementation starts for the first time, it is inevitable to have a variety of views including both positive and negative ones. In order to shed light on these contrasting views, potential drawbacks of portfolio will be examined in the following section.

Validity and reliability problems. Compared to traditional standard tests, which are thought to be consistent, objective, quantifiable and standard, portfolios bring about the problems of subjectivity, validity and reliability caused by reflections, evaluations or peer feedback (Baron & Boschee, 1995). Yurdabakan (2011) and Mabry (1999) reported the challenges of validity and reliability, and Ekbatani and Pierson (2000) also stressed the complexity of grading within portfolios creates subjectivity in the assessment.

Erden-Burnaz (2011) also stated that awarding the same score from different scorers, create concerns regarding inconsistency or unreliability in portfolio assessment. She also suggested that if an assessment system is unreliable, it is also invalid. Validity involves the extent to which assessment results are appropriate, meaningful, useful, and parallel to the aim of the purpose (Brown, 1998). So, practitioners might face reliability as well as validity problems while implementing portfolios.

Practicality. In regard to portfolio use, one of the most common difficulties stakeholders face is how to practically apply such an instrument. Practicality is directly related to time, effort, portability, finance, ease of implementation, scoring, and interpretation (Brown, 2004).

Johnson and Rose (1997) touch on the concern about the portability of portfolios, for which reason teachers may resist including them in their instruction. The management of papers or students' works could create problems to compile or classify information on the part of the teachers. Hence, they recommend that administrators brainstorm and negotiate with the teachers on the effectiveness of portfolio use and the ownership of students (Johnson & Rose, 1997). Alternatively, enabling students to undertake some responsibilities such as organizing portfolios could save teachers' work time. Mabry (1999) indicated the feasibility problem with portfolios as stakeholders needed to compile, carry and protect the artifacts within the portfolios. To sort out such a portability problem, using CDs or DVDs might work as suggested by Cole et al. (2000).

Time constraints. Another problem attributed to portfolios is the time constraints. Johnson and Rose (1997) implied that whatever changes take place in education, it is quite acceptable to spend time on a process-based assessment. However, in Kılıç's (2009) study, both teachers and students reported that portfolio implementation required more time and effort than they were used to. For this complaint, Johnson and Rose (1997) suggested that teachers could make a schedule for each student so that they can follow it without getting stressed at grading times. Students might also receive training to select the appropriate valuable artifacts. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) also recommend some adaptations in teachers' instructions when including portfolios in classes. On the other hand, Tierney et al.

(1991) did not view time as a major problem in their research. They stressed that the amount of effort made is a key factor in achieving quality work rather than the time spent in portfolio use (Tierney et al., 1997).

Other problems with portfolios. Another negative point of portfolios might be the lack of compatibility between the assessment and instruction. Mabry (1999) believed that teachers could not fully understand how students need to perform while using portfolios, especially in parallel to curriculum needs. They give little detail about what students know and can really do and thus the incongruence between curriculum and assessment may occur in the learning context.

Another criticism surrounding portfolios is that students cannot use these tools for acceptance into universities or to find employment but they can achieve their aims in this regard by the help of standard tests. Ekbatani and Pierson (2000) made an argument for promoting portfolio implementation more and make it standard.

Handling the aforementioned problems might be hard for teachers and students (Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000). In spite of these challenges, it is arguably of great importance to balance between the positive sides and downsides of portfolio implementation, with great emphasis on both institutional objectives as well as the individual needs of the students (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Regarding the schools and the learners, different types of portfolios are implemented to promote their various language skills.

Types of Portfolios in Language Classes

In language classes, portfolios could focus on the four macro skills of a learner as a whole, such as electronic portfolios (Bolliger & Shepherd, 2010; Siemens, 2004) or European Language Portfolios (ELP)(Ceylan, 2006; Little &

Perclova, 2001). Alternatively, portfolios could be developed to enhance a particular skill such as writing (Shay, 1997; Şahinkarakaş, 2005) or reading (Tierney et al., 1991). For specific skill-based portfolios, students should put their artifacts and reflections into their portfolios, with regard to the assessment of relevant skills (Johnson & Rose, 1997; O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Oral portfolios are one of those designed to empower learners' oral skills to communicate effectively (O'Malley& Pierce, 1996).

Oral portfolios. Before introducing the approaches in oral portfolios, it is necessary to have a clear understanding about the nature of speaking as a skill.

Speaking as a skill and its assessment. In our globalization era, English has become the medium for communication, not only in local and but also in global contexts (Khamkhien, 2010). As a result of this movement, teaching and learning English has become significant for communicative purposes to meet the growing local, national, and international demands (Khamkhien, 2010). Particularly, speaking skills which convey the speaker's message has received the much attention from educationalists since it is deemed to be crucial for communication (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996)

Lazaraton (2001) maintains that for many people, the ability to speak a language is exactly the same as knowing the language as it is the basic means of human communication. According to O'Malley and Pierce (1996), speaking means the "negotiation of meaning between two or more people, so it is related to the context in which it happens" (p. 59). Thus, communicative skills impact speaking in a language to a great extent.

Speaking is regarded as the most difficult skill in language classes. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) revealed that the nature of speaking causes such great difficulty in

actually speaking the language. While speaking, people generally do not pay attention to the accuracy or the completeness of their language (O'Malley &Pierce, 1996)). Their language might include contractions, reductions, and or elisions (Brown, 2001; Lazaraton, 2001). O'Malley and Pierce (1996) further noted that listening and speaking skills are closely intertwined. In order to be a proficient speaker, one needs to listen to other speakers and understand what has been said and respond accordingly. Brown (2001) also presented some challenges of speaking as performance variables, colloquial language, rate of delivery, stress, rhythm, and intonation. Another challenge with speaking is that in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, students are deprived of a natural environment to communicate with native people. At this point, teachers need to take this responsibility and find more authentic ways to expose their learners to the target language on a regular basis rather than just with exams or exam practice (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Considering these potential problems in classroom instructions, Brown (2004) gives some tips for teachers as in the following:

1. Focus on meaning
2. Provide intrinsically motivating techniques
3. Encourage the use of authentic language
4. Provide appropriate feedback
5. Capitalize on the natural link between speaking and listening
6. Give students opportunities to initiate oral communication
7. Encourage the development of speaking strategies (p. 275).

When it comes to the assessment of speaking, it is a difficult skill to evaluate since speaking is combined with other skills (Kitao & Kitao, 1996; Ur, 1996). Speaking can easily reveal the correctness of the learners' language in other macro

skills (Khamkhien, 2010). The difficulty involved with speaking assessment is that success of the speaker during an assessment depends on many variables such as good command of linguistic features (grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation…), the interlocutors' familiarity with the accent of the speaker and the topic itself, the speakers' anxiety, and approval of the topic by the audience (Dalkılıç, 2001; Khamkhien, 2010; Kitao & Kitao, 1996).

O'Malley and Pierce (1996) asserted that one major factor affecting speaking assessment is the listening skill of the speaker. When the test taker cannot understand what the interlocutor means, communication breakdown is highly possible. Another problem with speaking assessment is that with a large numbers of students in the exams it is difficult to ensure validity and reliability (O'Malley &Pierce, 1996). Other concern related to speaking exams is the pronunciation of the interlocutors which might be understood differently on the part of the test takers.

One of the most important obstacles learners have to overcome in speaking performance is anxiety (Öztekin, 2011). This barrier occurs when speakers assume their oral performance to be wrong, stupid or incomprehensible (Brown, 2001). According to Pertaub, Slater, and Carter (2001), anxiety generally emerges when the speakers need to give a public speech as they have a fear of being judged or humiliated by the other people. Although people realize that this nervousness is irrational, they cannot help feeling the anxiety, which can result in depression, distress, and frustration (Pertaub, Slater, and Carter, 2001). Dalkılıç (2001) attributed this type of anxiety to conspicuousness, lack of self-confidence, shyness, lack of knowledge or higher expectations of others. MacIntyre, Thivierge, and MacDonald (1997) explained that public speaking anxiety is "an individual level of fear or anxiety associated with either real or anticipated communication in front of a group

of persons" (p. 158). In MacIntyre, Thivierge, and MacDonald study (1997), 121 students were included in the research. Their findings revealed that audience interest in the topic, audience responsiveness, and formal evaluation of speech were the determining factors in increased anxiety regarding public speaking. Therefore, MacIntyre, Thivierge, and MacDonald (1997) firmly believed that the audience played a vital role in the speakers' anxiety. Another factor regarding anxiety while speaking is reported to be the achievement or success of the speakers (Dalkılıç, 2001). If the learners were able to succeed in their speaking tests, in general they become more motivated and less anxious while speaking in the class and in the exams. To overcome this affective challenge, Kitao and Kitao (1996) suggested different ways to test speaking: oral interviews, reading aloud, conversational exchanges, using visual materials in speaking exams, role play tests, group or pair activities. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) added more items for evaluation by suggesting self- and peer assessment, radio broadcasts, video clips, information gaps, story or text telling, improvisations, debates, or oral language portfolios. Dalkılıç (2001) further reported that students needed to be convinced about the nature of anxiety in speaking or they could be guided through peer-feedback to overcome this problem. Preparing workshops, presentations or seminars might be another possible course of action to take (Dalkılıç, 2001).

Khamkhien (2010) suggested that in order to cure the common problems in assessing speaking, teacher might take the following steps. First, they might find a way to apply an eclectic approach to cater to the needs of the students and promote communication the way CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) attaches importance to it. Second, teachers may need to raise their learners' awareness about the importance of meaningful as well as correct features of their language such as

vocabulary, grammar, pitch, intonation, and pronunciation. In addition, Kitao and Kitao (1996) recommended teachers record their students' speaking performances to score and check reliability. To be able to realize these suggestions and to cure the potential problems of speaking assessment, oral portfolios with technology might be an effective way in an EFL classes.

Oral portfolios with technology. Over the past three decades, technology has dramatically changed routines and practices within language teaching. Recently, integrating technology in alternative assessment techniques such as portfolio use has been of interest in ELT classrooms (Yoshida, 2001). Oral portfolios aim to solve the potential problems caused by paper-pen portfolios such as practicality, portability, and time constraints (Johnson & Rose, 1997). Technology-based portfolios support both individualized and large group instructions (Cole et al., 2000; Stefakanis, 2002) since the use of pictures, laser discs, CDs and DVDs and other optional digital media caters to different learning abilities or preferences (Cole et al., 2000).

There are some common technology-based oral portfolios such as audio, visual and electronic portfolios. A type is audio recordings which could use audio cassettes and could be placed in portfolios (Johnson & Rose, 1997; Yoshida, 2001). Students can record their speaking or reflections of any performance or a product of a skill. Students can also record their future aims and put it in their personal portfolios. Johnson and Rose (1997) argued that other materials could be utilized in such as CDs and DVDs. Retelling stories, jokes, riddles, memories, strategies in speaking/writing, a song that the students like, group discussions or a speech they gave before might be added as artifacts using these technological tools.

Another way to document the students' work or accomplishments could be stored through videotaping. (Stefakanis, 2002;Yoshida, 2001). In this way, teachers

can keep track of students' progress in reading and speaking. For instance, when learners are recorded while reading, teachers may focus on their intonation, facial expressions and other aspects of reading aloud. Teachers might also use video recorded portfolios in their speaking assignments. As the storage space is enormous in CDs, DVDs and computers, a product could be saved and searched for easily using this type of media. Also, video records could be stored and shared among peers, which lends to a more visual and audio realism within the portfolios (Cole et al., 2000). However, Stefakanis (2002) pointed out a disadvantage of video portfolios. If each student is responsible for each videotaping, it would be more practical on the part of the teachers; otherwise, teachers' doing the recording all the time could again cause a burden on them. Johnson and Rose (1997) suggested some examples of activities allowing video-record documentation such as role play, demonstrations, reports, discussions, editing peers' writings, and projects.

A common technology-based portfolios is the electronic portfolios (also called e-portfolios, webfolios, or web-based portfolios). E-Portfolio Portal (2004) defines an e-portfolio as a web-based information management system that uses electronic media and services. The learner builds and maintains a digital repository of their works which they can use to demonstrate competence and reflect on their learning (E-Portfolio Portal, 2004). Electronic (web-based) portfolios further offer the advantages of accessibility and portability of artifacts, faculty or advisor's assessments, and student reflections (Knight, Hakel, Gromko, 2008). Therefore, e-portfolios could be used to assess oral skills. Students might upload their digital, audio or visual recordings to a website or a CD/DVD to solve the problem of portability of portfolios (Cole et al., 2000).

Empirical studies on oral portfolios. There are very few studies regarding technology-based portfolios to promote oral skills. The studies focusing on oral portfolios reveal different results on particular aspects of using them and each research focus on specific features of such portfolios rather than a thorough examination of them. Danny Huang and Hung (2010) conducted a study on e-portfolios for oral skill improvement. The purpose of the study was twofold; to examine the effects of e-portfolios on three indices- language quantity, lexical richness and syntactic complexity- of EFL students' oral performance in conversation classes. This study also investigated the students' attitudes towards the employment of this digital device as the medium of oral work assessment. The researchers recruited control and experimental groups on which they administered pre and post tests with the use of e-portfolios. Their results relieved that the e- portfolio group performed better in terms of language quantity (Danny Huang and Hung, 2010). Secondly, the electronic portfolio treatment played a substantial role in students' use of various lexical items. The students used a wider array of vocabulary in their oral speeches compared to the control group. Lastly, the learners in e-portfolio group were in favor of using these type of portfolios, as they pointed out that the advantages to the e-portfolios outnumber the drawbacks (Danny Huang and Hung, 2010). E-portfolios enabled the students to revise and resubmit their recordings as many times as they pleased, so that they could see their development over time. Also, their audio artifacts accorded them the ability to formulate and organize their thoughts, enhanced their enthusiasm to give peer feedback, and lowered their anxiety level (Danny Huang and Hung, 2010). Regarding e-portfolios, students voiced a few downsides in an attitude questionnaire. They reported that they preferred to give immediate feedback in class rather than a delayed and online feedback. Also, the

students mentioned some technical problems they faced while uploading their recordings. Despite the problems, Huang and Hung (2010) mentioned the implementation of portfolios had overwhelming benefits.

Castañeda and Rodríguez-González (2011) explored students' positive attitudes to oral portfolio using video recording. In their study, 80% of the participants mentioned the effectiveness of portfolios regarding self-reflection. Moreover, participants reported that they improved in their speaking performance using oral portfolios. Likewise, Bolliger and Shepherd (2010) analyzed learners' perception of integrating e-portfolios into classes to promote oral skills. Their findings indicated that 89% of the students in this study agreed on the positive role of portfolios in self- evaluation. In Bolliger and Shepherd's (2010) research, learners emphasized the positive impact of portfolios on their speaking, as well. These two studies revealed that the participant students were pleased with the oral portfolios both in an e-portfolio and video portfolio implementations for the improvement of self-reflection and speaking skills.

In addition to the improvement in speaking skills, portfolios could also contribute to a decrease in anxiety of learners. Wang and Chang (2010) studied the effects of self-monitoring and portfolios on college students' anxiety levels and English speaking performance. This study revealed that oral portfolios enabled learners to learn not only from themselves, but also from their peers and their teachers, so the students could self-monitor and change their learning process, accordingly (Wang & Chang, 2010). The researchers also illustrated the slight decrease in students' communication apprehension through the use of such an alternative assessment. That is, it is not certain that oral portfolios help learners to decrease their anxiety as suggested by Baron and Boschee (1995). This finding might

imply that teachers need to foster a sense of achievement to reduce the students' anxiety level in speaking to a great extent. The study by Wang and Chang (2010) also provided an insight for teachers to include such oral assessment techniques in their classes as students expressed their willingness to evaluate their own performance upon watching their video-recorded speech. However, when this study is compared to the findings of Castañeda and Rodríguez-González (2011) and Bolliger and Shepherd's (2010), the participants did not express that oral portfolios improved their speaking skill at a significant level without the fear of speaking (Wang & Chang, 2010).

Although these previous studies presented an inconsistency in students' attitudes towards the effect of oral portfolios on speaking skills, such portfolios were found to cause great success in speaking in Brook's study (1999). In this research, she recruited 86 participants from 9th, 10th, 11th and 12 th grades to compare the control and the experimental groups in different levels. In the experimental group, students' speeches were videotaped to be graded by the teacher. These students also assessed themselves by watching their own speeches. The control group students were to be assessed traditionally by the teacher after the speech was delivered. The grades of the students were compared at the end of the semester and the researcher found out that there were more "A grades" in the groups that use video-portfolios. In addition, the students in the study also expressed their positive comments on this implementation.

In essence, empirical studies have shown some positive sides of oral portfolios; however, the comprehensive and convincing explanation of both the advantages and the disadvantages to these assessments have not been examined in detail in a research before.

Conclusion

Portfolios are important to involve the learners more in the assessment process by fostering their autonomy and reflection skills; however portfolios pose some challenges. Oral portfolios, specifically, focus on the improvement of speaking skills, intended to improve the learners' oral skills, foster the reflection and evaluation skills, promote autonomy and boost their motivation. However, the empirical studies provide conflicting findings on these aspects of oral portfolios. In addition, these studies do not reflect a comprehensive exploration of both the advantages and disadvantages to such assessments from the point of all stakeholders.

This chapter reviewed the literature on the shift from standard tests to alternative assessment, portfolios, purpose and components of portfolios, benefits and downsides of portfolios. Oral portfolios, in regard to the speaking skill, were explained. Then, oral portfolio types and empirical studies on oral portfolios were reviewed. The next chapter will touch on this problem by focusing on methodology, which covers participants, instruments used, data collection procedure and analysis of data.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The primary aim of this study was to shed light on both students' and teachers' attitudes towards speaking portfolios (SPs). The study was carried out in the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) at Middle East Technical University (METU), Ankara, Turkey. This chapter describes the participants, instruments, data collection and analysis methods. The study sought answers to the following question:

1. What are stakeholders' (students', instructors', administrators') attitudes towards speaking portfolios as an alternative form of assessment in tertiary level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes?

Setting

The participants of this study were 77 beginner level students, five speaking class teachers and two administrators in the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) at Middle East Technical University (METU). Students in this university take a placement test at the beginning of the year and are placed in five different levels: beginner, elementary, intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced. An additional separation is made at only the beginner level, between those who follow the regular curriculum and a pilot group which follows an alternative curriculum as a way of testing out possible future materials and syllabi. While regular group students use a series of commercial textbooks, pilot group students follow a different textbook and syllabus. The students of this year's pilot group were the participants in this study.

The pilot group students were randomly chosen from the students placed in beginner level at the beginning of the academic year 2011-2012. There were three reasons for choosing beginner level classes in SFL at METU. One cause was that they used speaking portfolios as an assessment tool for a semester so that it was possible to follow a long-term effect of such portfolios. The other reason was that it was easier to see the development of beginner level students' speaking skills and their attitudes as they had not been exposed to any loaded instruction in English before so they were less shaped compared to the other groups. Still another reason for the choice of these participants was that there were five classes in the pilot group in 2011-2012 academic year; in other words, it was a smaller group compared to the other levels. Hence it was much more convenient and easier to access to a relatively small number of students in these classes.

After the administrators determined the students, these chosen ones were informed about the pilot group and its purposes. They were asked whether they would agree to join the pilot group, and those who did were asked to sign a consent sheet to attend the classes. These students in the pilot beginner group took two integrated courses, which were 'reading & writing' and 'listening & speaking'. The 'listening & speaking' instructors were also included as participants in this study, as speaking portfolios were a requirement for those classes. The instructors voluntarily participated in the pilot group teaching in order to provide help for the academic research and curriculum innovations being tested by the institution. They also volunteered to contribute to this study by consenting to have individual interviews. The instructors were introduced to SPs, their components, aims, and functions, by the

administrators in September. They were trained to use SPs through a couple of sessions over a period of three weeks. These instructors then introduced SPs to the students by demonstrating the requirements for the portfolio without grading the students' first performances. Afterwards, students were assigned with an individual, pair or a group work task taken from the course book (see Appendix 4). Students were expected to prepare a conversation or speech in class with the help of the instructor, and the performances were videotaped the following day. The teacher showed the recordings to the class to enable them to give feedback to each other by leading them with some questions and by referring to the speaking portfolio rubric (see Appendix 3). The students also gave introspective feedback on their own performances with the guidance of the checklist provided by the book or the instructors (see Appendix 1). This guiding paper includes both the self-assessment checklist and the reflection part for each unit and it also has a part for the teacher evaluation at the bottom (see Appendix 1). The learners were provided with copies of their speech recorded on CD/DVDs a week before they submitted their first draft of their portfolios. They were asked to evaluate their own performance based on the rubric (see Appendix 3) and write a reflection by answering the guiding questions (see Appendix 2). As for submitting the drafts of the SP, they handed in their self-reflections for each unit (see Appendix 1), CDs and teacher feedback to the instructor with an overall reflection (see Appendix 2). In those overall reflections (see Appendix 2), they were asked to point out their poorest and strongest works with an explanation. The instructor checked these overall reflections, gave written feedback to the students and also marked their performances as "complete" or "incomplete". At the end of the semester, the whole portfolio was evaluated on the basis of a rubric (see Appendix 3) and counted as 5% of their whole grade for the course. At the end

of the term, in order to move on to the second semester program, the students also took a speaking exam, in which they were scored by two different instructors.

Participants

All 77 beginner level students in the pilot group kept a speaking portfolio for one semester. Thirty eight male and 39 female students, whose ages ranged from 18 to 22 took part in the study on a voluntary basis. The participants were given a consent form indicating that their participation in the study was voluntary and assuring that under no condition would their answers have any positive or negative impact on their grade in the course (see Appendix 5). At the end of the questionnaire, they were asked whether they would mind being interviewed and 49 accepted to have individual interviews. Five students out of these volunteers were chosen to be interviewed at the beginning of the second semester to gain a deeper insight into their experience with speaking portfolios. They were selected as representatives of the whole group, with two of them (one male, one female) having the highest attitude scores and two of them (one male, one female) having the lowest attitude scores in the questionnaire. A student with an average attitude score was also recruited at random.

The instructors were also interviewed as they were believed to be a determining factor in the appropriate implementation of SPs and in students' attitude towards SPs, hence five 'speaking & listening' instructors were interviewed. These instructors have 5 to 20 years experience in teaching. Three of them have a bachelor's degree in language and literature departments and one of these instructors has a master's degree in the same department. One of the instructors has a major in English language teaching and one has a degree in linguistics. In regard to speaking

portfolios, these instructors are in charge of responsibilities ranging from guiding students during the portfolio preparation period, video recording students' performances, and also grading the drafts of the SPs.

The last group of participants were two administrators of the SFL at METU. Both of them have PhD degrees, one in language teaching, the other in language and literature. Both have 16-20 years of teaching experience. They do not lecture or implement the portfolios themselves, but they do participate in preparing the syllabi and the exams for the pilot classes. They were interviewed once at the end of May about their opinions of speaking portfolios because they were involved in setting the aims, and devising the exams and the rubrics for the evaluation process. The coordinators also trained the instructors regarding the use of SPs and provided help if they needed any in this process.

All the participants in the study are shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1

Participants and Instruments

Participants	Instruments	Dates
77 Students	Questionnaires	In January
5 students	Interviews	Once in March
5 instructors	Interviews	Once in May
2 administrators	Interviews	Once in May

Instruments

In order to reveal the attitudes of stakeholders towards using speaking portfolios as an alternative assessment in tertiary level EFL classes, a questionnaire and interviews were employed.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in this study was the primary instrument for gathering data from the students. The questionnaire offered some advantages to the researcher and the study. For example, it provided the researcher with access to a greater number of students' attitudes. In addition, it required little time, was low cost and practical, and enabled the researcher to make group comparisons easily (Oppenheim, 2001). The questionnaire included both closed and open-ended items as they both have their upsides. While Likert-scale (closed-ended) items ensured practicality and low cost, the open ended items brought about freedom of answers and opportunity to probe (Oppenheim, 2001).

For the purpose of designing the questionnaire, the researcher visited one of the classes while students were being videotaped. In the middle of December, the researcher, herself, developed the items on the questionnaire by adapting the questions in the studies of Bolliger and Shepherd (2010), Castañeda and Rodríguez-González (2011), Ceylan (2006), Danny Huang and Alan Hung (2010), Erden-Burnaz (2011), Oğuz (2003), Öztekin (2011) and Subaşı (2002). The English items were given to two different professional interpreters for translation and thus created a question pool. Then, the researcher negotiated about these questions with three MA TEFL instructors. In addition, she administered them to MA TEFL 2012 classmates and a testing expert to reword the items, change unclear points and modify the

instructions accordingly. After getting some feedback from these experts, the researcher piloted a questionnaire with 45 Likert-Scale items in a class of SUNY students[1]. Thirteen SUNY students gave feedback on the formatting and the comprehensibility of the items. The data collected were entered into the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS 17.0) and the validity and the reliability of the test was checked. For the reliability of the 41 Likert-Scale items in the second part focusing on the participants' attitudes towards the SP, a Cronbach Alpha coefficient was found as .935. The researcher decreased the item numbers to 36 in the questionnaire upon some feedback received from her advisor and from the reliability and validity test results.

The resulting questionnaire ended up in two parts (see Appendix 5). The first part of the questionnaire included the information about the participants' demographic background and their exposure to English. The second part was mainly about the attitudes of students' towards speaking portfolios and it consisted of 36 Likert-scale items. The second part also included two open-ended questions focusing on whether students like the speaking portfolio or not. In addition, two more open-ended items were included in the same section about whether they prefer achievement exams to portfolios as an assessment or vice versa. The categories in the second part of the questionnaire were learner autonomy, self- reflection, peer-evaluation, practicality, motivation or anxiety, speaking skill improvement and overall attitude.

These were determined based upon the points mentioned in certain books on

[1] METU provides students with the opportunity to get two diplomas from both METU and SUNY (The State University of New York).The students in this class follow the same schedule with the pilot beginner group, and therefore, they have an idea about SPs.

portfolios (Cole et al., 2000; Ekbatani and Pierce 2006; Johnson & Rose, 1997; O'Malley and Pierce 1996).

Interviews

After analyzing the quantitative data, in order to get a more in depth analysis for the research question and to find out the "whys" behind stakeholders' attitudes, five students, five instructors and two administrators were interviewed. As Oppenheim (2001) suggests, interviews may reveal unexpected information and be less biased compared to the close items in a questionnaire. Thus, such a qualitative method was chosen to provide a different angle to this study. At first, 12 questions were prepared on the basis of the categories in the questionnaire. The questions were revised according to the feedback received from the advisor and peers on the clarity, relevancy and the difficulty of items (see Appendix 6). Some follow up questions were also addressed to the students depending on their responses during the interviews. If the individual student was observed to have focused on an interesting point in the questionnaire or to have come up with a striking idea during the interview, the researcher tried to have the interviewee elaborate on it(see Appendix 7). The questions started by asking the general reasons why the students like or dislike SPs, then went on with specific questions about the categories existing in the questionnaire (see Appendix 6)

The participant teachers and the administrators were also interviewed in order to find out their attitudes in depth. Eight questions were prepared on the basis of the questionnaire and the feedback received from the advisor (see Appendix 8). Before the interviews started, the instructors filled in a form about demographic information such as gender, bachelor's and master's degree (if any), teaching experience and

background knowledge on portfolios (see Appendix 9). In the interview, to get an overall idea about their attitudes to SPs, the researcher asked overall questions on the benefits and downsides of using speaking portfolios without leading the instructors to comment specifically on the categories (e.g. learner autonomy, self-reflection…). Rather, it was left up to the participants on the understanding that they should be allowed to express what they felt was most important. At some points, the researcher addressed some follow up questions to the instructors in order to have them elaborate on particular categories they mentioned briefly (learner autonomy, motivation…) (see Appendix 10).

Data Collection Procedures

Before conducting the study, the researcher first sought and received permission from the administrators in SFL at METU.

In the last week of the fall semester, the researcher got acquainted with all the students in the pilot beginner group. The updated questionnaire was given to students between January 16 and January 18 during class hours and took about 20 minutes to complete. In order to prevent any potential language barriers from disrupting the implementation of the questionnaire, it was given to the students in Turkish (see Appendix 5). The researcher was in the classroom to provide help for the students. At the end of the survey, they marked the options of “yes” or “no”, depending on whether they wished to take part in the individual interviews in the second semester.

In March, the researcher had chosen the five volunteer students to interview based on their attitudes revealed in the survey. The interviews were done in an office where the students could feel comfortable and be audio-taped easily. Before conducting the interviews, the researcher gave students some time to look at their

responses in the questionnaire and their speaking portfolios to enable them to remember the details easily. The interviews lasted for nearly half an hour each. Students were told they could leave anytime if they wished to do so.

In May, the researcher interviewed the five speaking and listening instructors who took part in the SP implementation. The interviews were done in either their staffrooms or in their offices, where audio taping was conducted easily. Before the start of the interviews, they were asked to fill out a form on their demographic information (see Appendix 9). They were also asked to sign a consent sheet (see Appendix 9) to take part in the study. The interviews took 10 to 20 minutes, depending on the instructors' elaboration on the eight questions prepared before. They were given freedom to finish up the interview whenever they wished.

At the end of May, interviews were carried out with two coordinators, who were responsible for the preparation of the aims, checklists of the SP, and the training or guiding of the instructors as necessary. They were first provided with documents (see Appendix 9) to consent to participate in the study and also to give information on their background. In the interview, they were asked six questions similar to those in the teacher interviews. It took approximately 15 to 25 minutes to conduct the interviews.

Methods of Data Analysis

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used. All the parts in the questionnaire except the last four questions were analyzed through SPSS 17.0. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the items. The frequencies, percentages and the standard deviations for each item of the questionnaire were calculated. Next, the mean for the items in each category were found. Negative items

in the survey were reverse-coded to calculate the average mean for each category. However, the percentages and frequencies were illustrated in the tables of following sections as they actually appear in the survey. Finally, the last four, open-ended questions on the questionnaire were analyzed through deductive and inductive qualitative analysis techniques (Thomas, 2006). As for the deductive analysis, the data were examined through categorization of responses depending on the categories (constructs) in the survey. In addition to the deductive analysis, inductive analysis of the qualitative data was also used. In particular, the data were analyzed depending on the recurring reasons for the likes and dislikes of students and their preference of the speaking assessment.

For the interviews, deductive as well as inductive qualitative analyses were again employed (Thomas, 2006). As for the deductive analysis, the recordings of the interviews were all transcribed and then coded according to the categories in the questionnaire. If the coded parts were regarded as relevant to each category (e.g. motivation), they were added to support the discussion on the category. With regard to the inductive analysis, when any other category emerged out of the data, the researcher also added them at the end as a separate section.

Conclusion

In this chapter the participants, instruments, research procedures and data analyses were discussed. The following chapter will reveal data analysis procedures, and the findings in relation to certain categories in more detail. The possible reasons for the results will also be mentioned in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

The aim of this study was to shed light on both students' and teachers' attitudes towards speaking portfolios (SPs). The study was carried out in the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) at Middle East Technical University (METU). In this study, a questionnaire was administered to 77 beginner level students, five of which were also interviewed individually. Some other interviews were also held to explore the instructors' as well as the administrators' attitudes towards the SP and to what extent they support the SP implementation.

The study addressed the following research question:

1. What are stakeholders' (students', instructors', administrators') attitudes towards speaking portfolios as an alternative form of assessment in tertiary level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes?

This chapter describes in detail the data analysis procedure for the questionnaire closed and opens items and the interviews and then presents the results of those analyses.

Data Analysis Procedures

With the exception of the last four questions in the second part of the survey, which were open-ended questions, all sections in the questionnaire were analyzed statistically through the Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0.

During the first stage of the data analysis, all Likert-scale items were grouped according to categories (constructs) created based on the literature review, e.g. learner autonomy and motivation. In the following step, the frequencies and percentages of each item were calculated to present the students' attitudes in relation to each category. The mean scores in this analysis were interpreted relying upon the following breakdown: 1.00-2.66: Disagree; 2.67-4.33: Mixed (Partial Agree, Partial Disagree); 4.34-6.00: Agree. While presenting the results in the table, the frequencies are introduced as "agree" (including partially agree, agree, and strongly agree scales) or as "disagree" (including partially disagree, disagree and strongly disagree). Negative questions were reverse coded to calculate the average mean scores for each construct, but the frequencies and the percentages are presented in the tables as they appear in the survey. In addition, the responses for the four open-ended questions in the second section of the questionnaire were first translated into English and then grouped according to the same categories mentioned above and are discussed after each statistical analysis.

All the interviews were transcribed and student interviews were translated into English. The data were coded according to the responses of interviewees for each of the aforementioned constructs. In order to establish reliability and validity of the qualitative analysis, some parts of the interviews were separately coded by another researcher for comparison purposes. The codes were compared and the differences were discussed to reach a consensus on the relevant category. After coding the interview transcripts, students' responses were put and discussed under the relevant category of the questionnaire items (both closed and open ones). While analyzing all the interview transcripts, some other categories also emerged out of the data. These are also presented as a separate section at the end of each part. Similar to

the students' individual interviews, the instructors' as well as the administrators' interviews were all transcribed and coded based on the categories determined before. During the analysis of these interviews, there again seemed to emerge certain different constructs, which will all be presented after first discussing these stakeholders' attitudes in relation to the other categories.

The results obtained from the analysis of the questionnaires and the interviews are presented in two parts below. In the first part, the analysis of questions in the student questionnaire is covered according to the following categories: general attitude, learner-autonomy, self-reflection or self-assessment, peer-feedback, practicality, motivation/ anxiety and the improvement of speaking skills. As the open-ended section in the questionnaire and the student interviews are also based on these categories, they are presented immediately following the results of the questionnaire. The second part of this chapter is devoted to a presentation of the instructors' and administrators' attitudes. The data gathered from all teacher interviews are presented according to the same categories referred to in the first part.

Attitudes towards Speaking Portfolios

Seven questions in the survey aimed to investigate students' overall attitudes towards the use of SPs (Table 2). For these questions, the students circled the options from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) in order to show their degree of agreement with the statements. Items 6, 13, 22 and 32 directly investigated the overall attitude of the students to the SP, addressing such questions as whether SPs are a good tool to evaluate speaking skills, and whether they think the positive sides overwhelm the negative sides of SPs and whether they would like to continue to do SPs in the following semester. The 7th, 16th and 28th questions also address attitude, but focus more specifically on the participants' feelings about SPs' accuracy and

authenticity as a tool for measuring students' real abilities and as a reflection of real-life speaking experiences.

Table 2 shows the details of the aforementioned questions on attitude:

Table 2

Overall Attitude of Students

Item		SD	D	PD	PA	A	SA	$\bar{x}$	Std
Q6	f	3	6	6	18	22	22	4.5	1.39
	%	3.9	7.8	7.8	23.4	28.6	28.6		
Q7	f	4	9	15	25	20	4	3.77	1.25
	%	5.2	11.7	19.5	32.5	26	5.2		
Q13	f	4	5	8	9	25	26	4.61	1.47
	%	5.2	6.5	14	11.7	32.5	33.8		
Q16	f	11	19	15	13	14	5	3.8	1.51
	%	14.3	24.7	19.5	16.9	18.2	6.5		
Q22	f	2	5	3	16	20	31	4.81	1.32
	%	2.6	6.5	3.9	20.8	26.	40.3		
Q28	f	4	8	10	18	23	14	4.16	1.42
	%	5.2	10.4	13	23.4	29.9	18.2		
Q32	f	12	2	6	15	19	23	4.24	1.73
	%	15.6	2.6	7.8	19.5	24.7	29.9		
Average Mean								4.27	

Note. f=Frequency; $\bar{x}$ = Mean; Std=Standard Deviation; SD= Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; PD=Partially Disagree; PA=Partially Agree; A=Agree; SA= Strongly Agree
Q 6= SPs are a good evaluation tool for speaking skills.
Q 7= The speaking tasks in my speaking portfolio allowed me to demonstrate my speaking skill ability exactly as it is.
Q 13= As compared to the first days of using the SP, now I feel more positive about it.
Qs 16= Speaking for the SP in front of the video camera didn't reflect the speaking experiences that I will have in real life.
Q22= The positive sides of preparing an SP are more than its negative sides.
Q28= The SP was a good tool for me with respect to the demonstration of my speaking ability.
Q32=I would like to go on doing SP work the following semester.

By considering the mean scores of these items overall, students seem to be on the top edge of the "agree" range of the scale, meaning that they are mostly in favor of SP implementation in a general sense. However, they might still have some concerns over specific issues, which will be presented in the subsequent sections. When we look into overall attitude questions, except for item 32 which also has a fairly high mean score ($\bar{x} = 4.24$, or upper end of the 'mixed' range), the averages confirm that students find the SP to be a good evaluation tool for their oral skills and believe its advantages outnumber its downsides (Item 22). When it comes to the question of whether they would like to continue with SP work in the future (Item 32), nearly three quarters (74%) of the students agree with the statement. This result indicates that one fourth of them may not want to work further with SPs, or they may wish to have some amendments made in the use of SPs. During the individual interviews, only student 5 expressed his/her opinion on a need to change the ways SPs are implemented:

> Well, the teacher sits beside the camera. We usually want to look at her as if there seems to be her authority. When she is next to the camera, we directly look at the camera, which disturbs us more and more. I mean if the teacher were not just on the opposite side but in another place, I think we could be more relaxed. Today we did it that way. The teacher left the camera aside and sat in another place. I felt really relaxed; I looked at both the class and the teacher. (Student 5)

On the other hand, the items related to the authenticity of the SP and its required tasks, namely items 7, 16 and 28, all have mean scores falling into the 'mixed' range- albeit in the upper half of the mixed range--implying that students are not completely convinced that SP tasks accurately and fully reflect their real

speaking performance. One possible reason for the concern expressed here may be related with the issue of memorization. Five students felt strongly enough about this issue to write it down in the open-ended question. Here is a sample excerpt to show their concern over memorized speeches:

> (…)Except this, as far as I could see, people give their presentations through memorization. In addition, the interlocutor's responses as pre-determined by the course book do not reflect the reality. (Student 15)

This might imply that prepared speeches or conversations could have caused students to memorize and not to produce their own words, thereby leading to the conclusion that speaking tasks for the SP did not reflect accurately students' real speaking abilities.

In order to explore students' attitude in depth, the analysis of each category (learner autonomy, self-reflection, peer- feedback, practicality, motivation/ anxiety and the improvement of speaking skills) will be presented in the sections below

Students' attitudes towards SPs in relation to learner autonomy. This section was composed of five questions related to students' opinions about issues that would reflect SPs' contributions to their autonomy as language learners (Table 3). The questions aimed to explore whether students could follow their progress in terms of their oral skills with the help of the SP, whether students find it useful to have to choose their best and worst speaking performance examples, and whether they learned to correct their mistakes through the use of SPs. The last two items investigated the students' ideas about the extent to which students need teacher guidance or teachers' evaluations to decide on their own performances. The results are presented in Table 3:

Table 3

Students' Attitudes towards SPs in relation to Learner Autonomy

Item		SD	D	PD	PA	A	SA	$\bar{x}$	Std
Q1	f	2	6	7	14	21	27		
								4.64	1.38
	%	2.6	7.8	9.1	18.2	27.3	35.1		
Q9	f	4	9	4	28	22	10		
								4.10	1.34
	%	5.2	11.7	5.2	36.4	28.6	13		
Q21	f	1	6	7	17	35	11		
								4.45	1.16
	%	1.3	7.8	9.1	22.1	45.5	14.3		
Q25	f	14	12	9	25	18	9		
								3.11	1.38
	%	5.2	15.6	11.7	32.5	23.4	11.7		
Q31	f	4	4	2	4	23	40		
								1.94	1.41
	%	5.2	5.2	2.6	5.2	29.9	51.9		
Average Mean								3.45	

Note. f=Frequency; $\bar{x}$ = Mean; Std=Standard Deviation; SD= Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; PD=Partially Disagree; PA=Partially Agree; A=Agree; SA= Strongly Agree
Q1= Thanks to the SP, I can now follow my progress in speaking more easily.
Q 9=I found it useful to make the selection of the speaking activities to be put into my SP by myself.
Q 21= Thanks to the SP, I have learned how to correct my speaking mistakes.
Q25=I need the instructor's guidance in deciding what to focus on when evaluating my speech in the speaking performance CDs.
Q31=I think instructors can evaluate our SP performance better than we do.

The results in this section show that students have different opinions about issues related to SPs' contribution to learner autonomy. For question 1, a large majority (80%) of the students agree that they could easily monitor their progress in

speaking skills through the SP. Seventy eight percent of the students also found it effective to choose their own works for their portfolios (Item 9). It is worth noting that a substantial number of students have a positive attitude to their development in correcting their speaking mistakes ($\bar{x}$ = 4.45). When it comes to the reversely coded items in this category, students hold mixed opinions about the need to have instructors' guidance when evaluating their works (Item 25). As for the other reverse item (Item 31), the vast majority of the students (89%) believes that teachers evaluate them better than they do themselves. This hesitancy in their ability to self-evaluate without the teachers' guidance strongly suggests that students still believe in the teachers' authority over their learning rather than their own control. The last two items indicate that most students still depend on their teachers' ideas or guidance even if they are given the opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning.

In the open-ended questions, only one student added a positive comment related to autonomy:

> Item 39: I prefer the SP to traditional exams: Definitely, because everything depends on me, all the things such as what I write or what I analyze all belong to me. The limit to the "so-called topic" is my mind. So, I think in a flexible way and I like working without any restrictions in my mind, so that is so good. (Student 76)

This single response related to learner autonomy seems to indicate that most of the students did not feel strongly enough about this aspect of SPs to write a comment—either positive or negative. In the interviews, two students expressed what can be considered as 'negative' comments for learner autonomy, when they spoke of their dependence on the teacher:

> I mean since she is the person who knows it better. (Student 2)

(…)there is a word that I don't know, I cannot guess it, or it could be a mistake definitely, at that point I need guidance. (Student 5)

As illustrated above, students feel they need guidance as they trust their teachers' ideas more than their own. This result is also parallel to the survey results, meaning that the SP does not necessarily guarantee the promotion of learner autonomy. The relatively low rate of responses on this category could be caused by the fact that students are given their DVDs a week before their submission deadline. That is, students have very little time to work on their performances recorded on DVDs in order to be autonomous enough.

Students' attitudes towards SPs in relation to self- reflection/self-assessment. This section was composed of six questions related to students' feelings and opinions about whether using SPs helps them to improve their self-reflection skills (Table 4).

Table 4

Students' Attitudes towards SPs in relation to Self-Reflection/Self-Assessment

Item		SD	D	PD	PA	A	SA	$\overline{X}$	Std
Q3	f	8	4	12	22	23	8	3.93	1.42
	%	10.4	5.2	15.6	28.6	29.9	10.4		
Q8	f	3	24	17	15	15	3	3.68	1.31
	%	3.9	31.2	22.1	19.5	19.5	3.9		
Q12	f	0	3	3	14	36	21	4.89	0.98
	%	0	3.9	3.9	18.2	46.8	27.3		
Q19	f	1	1	9	16	32	18	4.70	1.07
	%	1.3	1.3	11.7	20.8	41.6	23.4		
Q24	f	2	5	8	17	27	18	4.50	1.28
	%	2.6	6.5	10.4	22.1	35.1	23.4		
Q34	f	1	7	6	18	34	11	4.42	1.18
	%	1.3	9.1	7.8	23.4	44.2	14.3		
Average Mean								4.35	

Note. f=Frequency; $\overline{X}$ = Mean; Std:=Standard Deviation; SD= Strongly Disagree; D= Disagree; PD=Partially Disagree;
P=Partially Agree; A=Agree; SA= Strongly Agree;
Q3= The questions that I answered for my SP helped me gain awareness for my future SP speeches.
Q 8= After watching the video recordings, I had difficulty in evaluating my own speaking performance.
Q12=Watching the presentation later, which is a part of my SP work, helped me evaluate myself.
Q19=The SP helped me reflect on my speaking performance.
Q24=The SP helped me see my strengths and weaknesses in speaking.
Q34= Thanks to the SP, I can now evaluate my individual or group work speaking performance more objectively.

As seen in Table 4, the overall mean scores indicate that students agree with most of the questions in this category except items 3 and 8, with which they partially agree. For question three, there is a mixed response when it comes to the question of whether they can be more self-aware in their future assessment thanks to the reflection questions ($\overline{X}$ = 3.93). This mixed response could reflect genuine mixed

feelings about the usefulness of the self-evaluation for the future practices. Alternatively, these ideas might result from the ambiguity of the term “future SP speeches”. Similarly, the findings on Q8, which is a negative item, are truly mixed ($\bar{x}$ = 3.68). Although the mean falls into the partially agree category, suggesting that students found it somewhat difficult to self-evaluate, the actual frequencies are very evenly spread among the categories. So while a slightly larger group (57 %) disagree that they have difficulty in evaluating themselves; more than 40% of them are still concerned with self-assessment. As to item 12, 92 % of the students at least partially agree that watching their performances through the video recordings helps them to evaluate themselves. For the rest of the questions, a considerable number of students (85.8% for item 19; 80.6 % for item 24 and 81.9 % for item 34) at least partially agree on the fact that the SP has enabled them to see their strengths and weaknesses and help them become more objective both for individual and group performances. All these results indicate that students generally felt a sense of development in their reflective skills, but on some points they still had some problems.

In the open-ended question section, 13 respondents mentioned the issue of self-reflection in a positive way by referring to the ability to easily see their development in speaking with the help of SPs. They also noted that standardized tests did not allow them the opportunity to reflect on their performance thoroughly. Here are some sample excerpts commenting on the promotion of self-reflection skills:

> Thanks to the SP, we can see the development in our speaking skills and evaluate ourselves. I do not think that traditional exams reflect our own progress exactly. (Student 41)
>
> (…)I found an opportunity to evaluate myself on my own. (Student 46)
>
> On the contrary, in the open ended section, only one student expressed a

negative opinion on the difficulty he had in evaluating himself:

> It is difficult to do the reflection part and express yourself thoroughly. (Student 8)

Similar to this particular student's difficulty in self-assessment, in the interviews, three of the students also mentioned that they had a hard time to evaluate themselves:

> I couldn't see whether there existed good things in my speech, where my performance increased and at which point it decreased. (Student 1)
>
> I only saw what my teacher showed in relation to my mistakes and I paid attention to those things more carefully. (Student 2)
>
> Actually, I had difficulty. There were some performances very close to each other in terms of their success or failure. For example, let me say, there are three good performances, I mean, I like all of them and it was difficult for me to choose one from them or when there were three unsuccessful performances, I was always thinking about which one was the worst. The thing was that I could not determine these. (Student 3)

On the other hand, two of the students in the interviews noted that SPs gave them the opportunity to evaluate themselves and become objective to find and correct their mistakes:

> (…) We looked into the [performances] on the basis of the portfolio rubric. At that point, you evaluate what parts are complete. If you say: I am ok with all the things here [on the rubric], you will get a score on that. (…)you inevitably become objective by evaluating each and every piece (Student 4)
>
> After watching my performance, I could clearly say where I made the mistake, I mean, I try to work on that more. (Student 5)

The variety in ideas of students on self-assessment might stem from the minimal amount of training they got on self-reflection or on using the assessment criteria effectively. It seems from the interviews that some students might need more guidance at the beginning:

> All of the criteria were not easy for me. Some parts of the criteria were difficult for me, I mean from my perspective, it was hard to use it but we cannot say that we did not stick to it. (Student 1)
>
> Interviewer: Did you evaluate yourself in the light of the criteria or did you do it with your feelings, for example this was good, this part was bad and so on…
>
> Interviewee: Perhaps, we did it depending on our feelings, we did not look at the other [the criteria], I mean. Actually we made some pronunciation mistakes, I mean, we looked at them with our feelings more, I guess. (Student 2)
>
> To tell the truth, I did not stick to the criteria but to what I saw and heard…(Student 3)
>
> Interviewer: Ok, did you have difficulty in applying the criteria (and the interviewer shows the criteria)?
>
> Interviewee: Here, I did not have difficulty in it. (Student 4)
>
> (…)I did some of them by looking at the criteria, there was the use of vocabulary in it, so I did it depending on it, I mean there was its effect (Student 5).

It seems that most of the students agree that their self-assessment skills have developed to some extent, but they still seem to depend on their teachers. The outstanding reason for this problem is the students' difficulty in applying the criteria

effectively. The students may not have gotten enough training on the effective use of the rubric or the students might need more time to develop this skill.

Students' attitudes towards SPs in relation to peer-feedback. There were five questionnaire items aiming to explore the students' attitudes towards SPs in terms of the impact of peer-feedback on their own language development. The results are presented in Table 5:

Table 5

Students' Attitudes towards SPs in relation to Peer-Feedback

Item		SD	D	PD	PA	A	SA	$\bar{x}$	Std
Q11	f	2	4	8	17	35	11	4.45	1.17
	%	2.6	5.2	10.4	22.1	45.5	14.3		
Q18	f	4	6	8	26	28	5	4.07	1.23
	%	5.2	7.8	10.4	33.8	36.4	6.5		
Q20	f	2	4	9	21	33	8	4.33	1.14
	%	2.6	5.2	11.7	27.3	42.9	10.4		
Q26	f	8	18	20	19	10	2	2.85	1.28
	%	10.4	23.3	26	24.7	13	2.6		
Q33	f	1	6	10	18	27	15	4.41	1.23
	%	1.3	7.8	13	23.4	35.1	19.5		
Average Mean								4.02	

Note. f= Frequency; $\bar{x}$ = Mean; Std= Standard Deviation; SD= Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; PD=Partially Disagree; PA= Partially Agree; A=Agree; SA= Strongly Agree;
Qs 11=While we were watching the video recordings, the corrections my classmates made helped me realize my mistakes.
Qs18= Listening to the speaking samples of my classmates helped me improve my SP.
Qs 20=I found it useful to listen to my classmates' speaking performance samples.
Qs 26=I found it difficult to evaluate the speaking performance of my classmates.
Qs 33= Listening to my classmates' speeches enabled me to understand in which ways my own speaking performance was complete or incomplete.

The mean scores calculated showed in Table 5 reveal that students seem to agree that SPs promote peer-feedback to some extent. The responses that gained the

highest mean scores were items 11 and 33. That is, the majority of the students believe that the error correction done by their classmates helped them to recognize their own mistakes (Item 11; $\bar{x}$ = 4.45) and also listening to their classmates' speeches enabled students to see why their own performance was marked as complete or incomplete (Item 33; $\bar{x}$ = 4.41). Similar to these results, the mean score of item 20 ($\bar{x}$ = 4.33) fits barely into the agree category, which means that students for the most part hold the idea that it was beneficial to watch their peers' performances. Regarding item 26, however, the frequencies are pretty evenly distributed, which means that students did not find it terribly difficult to assess their peers' performances though they experienced some challenges.

While there are a fair number of students agreeing with the contribution of the peer feedback element of the SP to the students' own performance/ability to self evaluate in the survey, students did not mention this aspect in the open-ended questions at all. Only one student expressed his opinion on the ineffectiveness of peer-feedback in the implementation of the SP:

> …In addition, I find a lesson quite boring especially when just one person speaks without any participation of the class…(Student 72).

The slightly positive attitude towards the peer feedback aspect of SPs, introduced in the survey results, was also reflected in the interviews, where three students noted that they found watching their peers to be helpful for their own performance while just one (Student 3) expressed that s/he did not benefit from the peers' speeches. To summarize the ideas, one negative and one positive excerpt are presented below:

> Well, when I give my presentation last, I rehearse my own speech [while the peers are presenting]. If I have delivered the speech [at the beginning of the

> lesson], I listen to my friends' speeches without any purpose (Student 2)
>
> If the person speaks well, wow, how nice she has spoken and while listening in such a way, you can hear her/ his mistakes. You cannot hear your own mistake while speaking but when listening to somebody else, it directly sounds awkward to you. Ohh! S/he did it; or, for example, if her hands are fiddling a lot, your eyes are stuck with it. I mean you may know that it is wrong and so on. I mean his/ her mistakes seem to be more obvious to you (Student 4)

These quotations indicate that, except for Student 2, the students seem to have benefitted from peer-evaluation in the classroom. That is, they evaluated their peers' performances to make changes in their own speeches, so they found it useful to some extent. However, two of them (Students 3 & 5) also expressed their anxiety or negative feelings of being judged in a harsh way though ultimately concluding that they benefitted in some way from the peer-feedback:

> I was quite bad at pronunciation, I was reading out and sometimes I could not read it exactly as it needed to be. My classmates were laughing at me at times, they told me: "You should say it in this or that way" and later on I learnt it and then I learnt it again and again (Student 3)
>
> In the classroom environment, there are some people who like and dislike us, they make fun of us, and this was bad on our part. We felt humiliated when we said something…There were some people whose speeches were quite successful, one of them was quite nervous, so I learnt not to be nervous; plus she added very nice words in her presentation, so I got some of them. (Student 5)

Students 3 and 5 also appear to have learnt from their peers although they

faced some affective challenges. In general, the difference across the students' responses might be because of their individual anxiety levels, or the way the teacher dealt with peer-feedback in the classroom such as expressing the aim of it or giving some tasks to engage students while evaluating their peers.

Students' attitudes towards SPs in relation to practicality. Four questionnaire items investigated the students' opinions about the practicality of SPs (Table 6). Two questions investigated whether students spent a lot of time when working on their SPs; and the rest of the questions aimed to learn whether students put a lot of effort into their SPs. The results are presented in Table 6:

Table 6

Students' Attitudes towards SPs in relation to Practicality

Item		SD	D	PD	PA	A	SA	$\overline{x}$	Std
Qs2	f	12	28	8	11	11	7	3.97	1.59
	%	15.6	36.4	10.4	14.3	14.3	9.1		
Qs14	f	3	10	20	21	18	5	3.72	1.25
	%	3.9	13	26	27.3	23.4	6.5		
Qs29	f	3	11	22	23	14	4	3.4	1.2
	%	3.9	14.3	28.6	29.9	18.2	5.2		
Qs36	f	7	11	24	20	10	5	3.61	1.31
	%	9.1	14.3	31.2	26	13	6.5		
Average Mean								3.67	

Note. f= Frequency; $\overline{x}$ = Mean; Std= Standard Deviation; SD= Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; PD=Partially Disagree ; PA= Partially Agree; A= Agree; SA= Strongly Agree;
Qs 2= It took me a lot of time to prepare the SP in class (adjusting the camera, videotaping, etc.)
Qs 14=It was easy for me to complete the SP.
Qs 29= I expended a lot of effort when preparing the SP.
Qs 36=I spent a lot of time preparing the SP.

As is seen in Table 6, the mean scores for the negative questions (Items 2, 29, 36) indicate fairly mixed responses for the practicality issue. That is, the students

partially disagreed with the idea that preparing the SPs took an excessive amount of time and required a lot of effort. At the same time, the positively worded question about the ease of SP preparation got a similarly mixed response as is seen in the mean score (Item 14).

For responses to the open-ended questions related to practicality, the students' answers were congruent with the survey results. In total, 12 students mentioned some points about either time or practicality issues. While seven of them seem to be happy with it, five of them have some complaints about it. Here are a few examples of students' negative views in terms of the practicality of SPs:

> We need to study on fewer topics and well on one topic at a time. It is easier. (Student 34)
>
> Instead of the time we spent for the SP, we could do better things for speaking. (Student 65)

Both students appear to agree on the same point that it would be better to work on fewer topics to save time and to ensure practicality.

In the interviews, there are again inconsistent ideas on the practicality of the SPs. Here are some excerpts to show these discrepancies:

> Time is relative and depends on people a lot, every time is experienced by everyone differently, so one can have difficulty, both in writing and getting ready for the speech but this difficulty is not something that is unbearable, I mean you can write [the reflection] (Student 1).
>
> As said before, we spent a lot of time on it. It would be better to do something different. The preparation time, for instance, takes a lot of time. We had a one hour preparation… I mean, we first got prepared for an hour, instead of that, in my opinion better things could be done. I think like this, as it is time

consuming. (Student 2)

Interviewer: Ok, perhaps you both made an effort and spent some time, is it a lot or a little?

Interviewee: The concept of "a little" and "a lot" depends.

Interviewer: I mean was it ok for you?

Interviewee: Yeah, it was (Student 3)

I did not have much difficulty. I took part in all recordings and I know that I take my work seriously, so I did not have much difficulty (Student 4).

I watched each and every piece, in which one did I use more vocabulary, in which one was I more fluent? The presentation was natural, I did not prepare it for a long time, but I had hard times evaluating myself and it took a lot of time. (Student 5)

It seems from the interviews that three of the students interviewed did not find the overall process extremely time consuming or difficult (Students 1, 3 and 4). The second student found the implementation a complete waste of time. The fifth one based her idea on the difficulty she had evaluating herself. This result is similar to the result in item 8 on Table 3 which also showed that it was not easy for some of the students to evaluate themselves (see Table 4, item 8). The findings indicate that practicality depends to a large extent on students' aims and on their general attitudes towards SPs.

Students' attitudes towards SPs in relation to motivation / anxiety. These questions on the questionnaire aimed to investigate students' attitudes related to either motivational issues or to the anxiety they experienced (see Table 7). Items 4, 10, 27 and 35 explored students' perceptions related to the idea that SPs motivate them or help them to overcome their anxiety in speaking. The remaining questions

focused on whether students feel anxious or afraid about making mistakes. Here are the results in Table 7:

Table 7

Students' Attitudes towards SPs in relation to Motivation / Anxiety

Item		SD	D	PD	PA	A	SA	$\bar{x}$	Std
Qs4	f	7	7	6	18	25	14	4.15	1.52
	%	9.1	9.1	7.8	23.4	32.5	18.2		
Qs10	f	3	7	9	22	22	14	4.23	1.34
	%	3.9	9.1	11.7	28.6	28.6	18.2		
Qs17	f	3	3	1	22	30	18	2.35	1.20
	%	3.9	3.9	1.3	28.6	39	23.4		
Qs23	f	4	4	6	19	19	25	2.44	1.41
	%	5.2	5.2	7.8	24.7	24.7	32.5		
Qs27	f	7	4	10	13	26	17	4.27	1.52
	%	9.1	5.2	13	16.9	33.8	22.1		
Qs 35	f	4	11	13	13	23	13	4.02	1.48
	%	5.2	14.3	16.9	16.9	29.9	16.9		
Average Mean								3.58	

Note. f= Frequency; $\bar{x}$ = Mean; Std= Standard Deviation; SD= Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; PD=Partially Disagree; PA= Partially Agree; A= Agree; SA= Strongly Agree;
Qs 4 = Thanks to the SP, I have become more motivated to learn English.
Qs 10=The SP served to ease my fears related to speaking in English.
Qs 17= I felt nervous and anxious during the SP talks.
Qs 23= During my SP talks, I was afraid to make a mistake.
Qs 27=The SP increased my motivation to speak in English during classes.
Qs 35=The SP enabled me to participate in the classes more actively.

As illustrated in Table 7, students are in the 'partially agree' range on the question of whether their motivation to learn English has increased because of using SPs. Students have quite mixed ideas on each item except the negative ones, item 17 and 23. Two thirds of the students (72%) are of the opinion that they have started to

speak in the classroom (Item 27) with the help of SPs. On the other hand, a considerable number of the students (almost 91 %) have the idea that SP performances made them nervous and anxious (Item 17). This result is interesting as SP use is intended to decrease the level of anxiety that students have in standard exams.

In the open-ended questions, as opposed to the survey results, a rather large number of students chose to add in positive comments. Twenty four students wrote comments saying that they had either fun during the SP speaking activities or that they started to like speaking and were beginning to talk more in the lessons. Here are some excerpts from the open-ended questions:

> Item 39: I prefer the SP to traditional exams. While speaking, I am now more successful and as I do not feel the exam anxiety, I am relaxed, so I express myself better…(Student 51)
>
> It is fun. (Student 33)
>
> I found an opportunity to get prepared and speak in front of a camera. In such a way, I overcame my anxiety and started to feel self-confident. (Student 43)

In congruence with the excerpts above, one student in the interviews specifically spoke on the motivational issue:

> That is when the recording takes place, the SP arouses a kind of excitement. That is, you go to the stage and speak in front of both your teacher and the camera. As I like speaking, speaking there arouses some excitement, so it motivated me to work, to learn new vocabulary or new pronunciation, that is, they all motivated me. (Student 3)

On the other hand, six students added negative comments on the topic of motivation. Here are some sample excerpts to summarize their common idea:

The topics are too restricted. (Student 29)

The topics were from the books and they were not general enough. (Student 40)

The speaking topics of the book units are too boring. (Student 72)

It is clear from the students' responses that the topics did not draw these students' attention so they found it difficult to speak on the given ones easily. All these findings imply that students are not fully convinced that the SP makes a contribution to their motivation.

When it comes to anxiety-related ideas, 18 students took the opportunity to write in a comment about anxiety in the open-ended questions, most of them mentioned it in a negative way. For example:

When there was a really low proficiency level, I did not like to stand in front of people and give them a talk and I feel anxious when I deal with the SP…In traditional exams, I don't feel any kind of anxiety. As I got nervous in the SP, it directly affected my performance negatively. (Student 62)

To stand in front of the camera makes me nervous and it causes us to do less than we actually can do. (Student 70)

Five of the students, however, had more positive comments about anxiety as they declared that they overcame this problem after a while, for example:

I feel very nervous in video-recording and the frequent videotaping makes me more nervous. The SP has decreased the level of anxiety that I have during a talk.(Student 13)

Four students in the interviews also underlined the same point. Here are some quotations from the interviews:

Video recordings are more nerve-wracking. I tried to utter some words in the

exam. (Student 1)

When you learn something, you feel better. I mean for me, I feel less anxious now and it is related to learning. (Student 2)

If the teachers had given the speaking exam when I came to the school for the first time, I would have blushed most probably…When you make a transition from the difficult to the easy, we perform the easier one better. (Student 3)

(…) definitely I have less anxiety in SP [performances] compared to the beginning of the year. (Student 5)

It seems that students are anxious in SP performances for such reasons as a general fear of public speaking in English or of being videotaped; however, they seem to be aware of the aims of SPs and try to overcome their anxiety as the time passes.

All in all, it is clear that the SP implementation enabled students to participate in the classes more; however, the topics on which students spoke did not appeal to all of them. The SP assessment conducted regularly seems to have contributed to the students' attentiveness in the classes, but the topics suggested by the course book did not engage the students. This might be because the book is not an in-house material, but a commercial book. In addition, most of the students have gone through anxiety problems, though some have started to overcome them. The findings on this category suggest that the SP did not guarantee the promotion of motivation to a full extent and it causes anxiety on the part of many students.

Students' attitudes towards SPs in relation to speaking skills. The questions in this section of the questionnaire aimed to investigate students' attitudes towards the use of SPs in terms of their perceived effect on speaking skills. This section was comprised of seven questions in total (see Table 8). The questions aimed

to find out whether students have developed their speaking skills such as the organization of their talks, stress, intonation, pronunciation, and vocabulary. The results of each item can be seen in Table 8:

Table 8

Students' Attitudes towards SPs in relation to Speaking Skills

Item		SD	D	PD	PA	A	SA	$\bar{x}$	Std
Qs5	f	3	5	9	20	20	20	4.41	1.37
	%	3.9	6.5	1.7	26	26	26		
Qs15 a	f	2	0	4	16	31	24	4.89	1.07
	%	2.6	0	5.2	20.8	40.3	31.2		
Qs 15 b	f	3	3	10	26	22	13	4.29	1.23
	%	3.9	3.9	13	33.8	28.6	16.9		
Qs 15c	f	2	4	10	25	24	12	4.31	1.19
	%	2.6	5.2	13	32.5	31.2	15.6		
Qs 15 d	f	3	2	10	13	30	19	4.58	1.28
	%	3.9	2.6	13	16.9	39	24.7		
Qs 15 e	f	2	1	15	19	27	13	4.38	1.17
	%	2.6	1.3	19.5	24.7	35.1	16.9		
Qs 30	f	1	3	13	11	35	14	4.53	1.16
	%	1.3	3.9	16.9	14.3	45.5	18.2		
Average Mean								4.48	

Note. f= Frequency $\bar{x}$ = Mean; Std= Standard Deviation; SD= Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; PD= Partially Disagree; PA=Partially Agree; A=Agree; SA=Strongly Agree;
Qs 5: The SP enabled me to practice speaking on a regular basis.
Qs 15: The SP contributed to my speaking skills in the following aspects:

a. Planning my talk
b. Stress
c. Intonation
d. Vocabulary
e. Grammar

Qs 30: Preparing the SP enabled me to reinforce what I learned related to speaking English.

By considering the mean scores, it is clear that most of the students agree with each item except items 15b and 15c, which fall just short of the agree category into the partially agree range. In other words, most of the students (78%) believe that preparation for the performance provided them with the opportunity to practice speaking on a regular basis, and also helped them to revise and practice what they have learnt in their speaking classes ($\bar{x}$ = 4.53). In addition, the vast majority of the participants (92%) are of the opinion that SPs helped them to organize their speech (Item 15a). The lowest mean score is measured for item 15b, meaning that students were least sure about whether they gained benefit from SPs for the improvement of their stress patterns when speaking.

In the open-ended questions, slightly more than half of the students (40 of them) specifically mentioned the positive effect of SPs on their speaking skills. Most of them referred positively to having the opportunity to do public speaking or speaking practice in general and some also noted the improvement in the organization of their speech as well as pronunciation skills. For example:

> The SP encourages us to speak. It shows us the level of our speeches and speaking skills. (Student 4)

> The SP helped me to speak English a lot. It helped me to improve how I need to speak and I learnt how to speak in an organized way… It encourages us to speak. (Student 5)

> As the SP recordings were done after each unit, the SP enabled us to internalize the unit and we got an experience on public speaking. (Student 11)

> That is the only place I can speak. (Student 27)

> The SP enabled us to get the skill to speak in a classroom environment, in

front of everyone. (Student 34)

The SP was an element pushing us to speak English. Otherwise, I would not speak at all. [Smiley☺] (Student 35)

It helps us to pronounce the words correctly. (Student 38)

The excerpts show that students generally had favourable opinions of the SP in terms of their contributing to an improvement in public speaking skills, organization of their speech, pronunciation and the opportunity to have speaking practice. The students emphasized that the SPs provided them with the possibility to have regular practice in speaking, which is also similar to the results in Table 8, item 5. It is also interesting that they do not seem to be viewing SPs as an assessment device but more as an opportunity to practice speaking.

The students in the interviews were also broadly convinced that SPs provide a path to the improvement of certain speaking skills:

Interviewer: Another question…Thanks to the SP speeches, do you believe that your speaking skills are fluent, do you think that it has become fluent?

Interviewee: (…) For example, “encourage someone to do something”, when you think of this, you automatically put it there now, but in the past when I tried to remember the word, I thought of something else, but this happens less nowadays. (Student 1).

I am of the opinion that the SP is very influential in pronunciation skills… The regular videotaping and doing it after each unit is the positive and practical aspect of it. (Student 2)

> Actually I learnt such things as …my English was not good, for example my friend writes something on the modal verbs, and I saw that there and he explained it to me a little bit, then I used that in my sentences. I mean I learnt different sentence structures, new vocabulary in such a way. (Student 3)
>
> Interviewer: Ok, has it ever happened to you…I mean have you ever tried to say something but I don't mean a specific word and you got stuck. Have you told something spontaneously but not in such a way that you memorized it?
>
> Interviewee: Well, that happens. If you don't do it, you just stand there. You have to …different things…Or that remains there as it is. And you moved onto something different…(Student 4)

The student interviews also imply that SPs have raised their awareness in terms of their speaking skills. Most of them agree that SPs helped them improve different aspects of their speaking skills such as vocabulary, grammar or pronunciation as well as being able to speak spontaneously when needed.

The next part will present the instructors' as well as administrators' attitudes towards the SP.

Overall Attitude of Instructors' and Administrators' towards the use of SPs

In a general sense, all of the instructors were positive towards the SP use and seemed to highlight its advantages more than its disadvantages. When asked specifically to compare the SP and the achievement test in speaking, they also favoured the SP as an alternative assessment, as it provided them the opportunity to monitor the students' progress, including their strengths and weaknesses, on a regular basis, and was therefore preferable to the one-shot speaking test. A selection of

related excerpts is displayed below:

> …. if your one assignment is really bad, there is a chance to do a really good one in the next one. So it actually gives the chance to improve yourself… for example, in speaking exams, you actually have one chance, or one shot. So if it's good, it's good. But if it's bad, if you're not on your day (…), you only have one shot.(Instructor 1)

> …the students didn't have any difficulty, most of them got good grades [on the speaking test] because they were assessed with the things that they had already done in the classes [SP studies & performances]. (Instructor 2)

> The biggest advantage is that it tests the whole process of learning, and the whole process of speaking. When it is just the end product, when it is just the two hour exam or one hour exam at the end of the year, the students may have some problems because of exam anxiety or he may not be feeling ok that day, and he may not reflect…his own learning, but when it is a portfolio assessment, it shows the improvement in the whole process of learning and that is better and it is easier to spot the weaknesses and strengths of the students in a portfolio (Instructor 5)

The responses above indicate how, with the SP, teachers as well as students can see the progress in speaking through the regular assessment of SP performances. One of the instructors raised further interesting points related to SPs' positive sides, ranging from the change in her point of view to changes in social aspects of the students' lives:

> I mean they benefitted a lot… and I mean not only for this year or just for the sake of learning English but I am sure they had lots of advantages personally

> and for their further studies in the department and even in their social life, I believe that things have changed. I don't know but because in class you see the development of those students, their first day and the point they have and come up to now. So, I strongly want it to be done in class. I mean, the thing is with this book and with this program, I also learnt that speaking is something which could be taught, I mean… Before that, I didn't think like that, to tell the truth. But you can teach people how to speak, so that is really nice and as I said, I am sure they can use those strategies even in their native languages perhaps. (Instructor 2)

This implies that SP use also played an important role in changing this teacher's philosophy in teaching speaking and contributed to students' improvement in many areas including even their social lives.

In line with the teaching instructors, the coordinators are also of the opinion that the SP has many advantages. Although they also noted a few problems, they believe that these problems could be easily solved and that SPs should continue to be implemented:

> (…)I would say of course there are some parts which need to be improved. Yeah, we need, we can improve those parts but I think we should continue because we didn't have a kind of a major or big problem (Administrator 1)

> I think we should keep doing it (…) When I watch students' performances, they were not like beginner students actually. The pronunciation was very clear, they were able to communicate in English and we did have one reading club as well, where they actually sat down with friends in a group and they spoke for 45 minutes about a story they had read. (Administrator 2)

Similar to what the instructors noted, the two administrators seem to be pleased with SPs overall and wish to keep implementing it despite some existing flaws. They also emphasized that students have improved a lot and have started to use English in different contexts other than just the SPs. They added that SP assessment is a process-based assessment, so they as well as the students can see the development and have the chance to improve over time:

> … the teacher looks, should look at the whole speaking, I mean, it [SP] is not just the ten minute performance…This is something… totally a different term, I mean you need to look at the individual differences, as well (Administrator 1).

> …students have many chances and different types of tasks. They do individual work they do group work, discussions, pair work. So, we are able to see students' performances in different patterns. Seeing their progress over time also, I think is good in terms of assessment. (Administrator 2)

To sum up, the overall impression shows that instructors' and administration preferences for the SP assessment are broadly congruent with what students expressed on the process-based evaluation. That is, teachers also agree that the SP is a process assessment considering individual needs, and allowing students to easily see their mistakes and to have the opportunity to develop themselves in terms of their speaking skills. According to them, the SP assessments have also made a positive contribution to the achievement test in speaking administered at the end of the term.

Instructors' and Administrators' attitudes towards SPs in relation to learner autonomy. The instructors did not bring up the issue of learner autonomy through the use of SPs during the individual interviews so much. However, two

instructors pointed out that they either encourage their students to do some outside work or they reduce the amount of preparation time in order to lead students to be more autonomous. In the words of these teachers:

> (…)The thing was I told them to go onto the Internet and (…) have a look at one or two websites and get some information about, let's say, genetically modified foods, and then I told them not to take notes but just read, try to learn something new that they haven't heard before and then the next time when they come, they just tell that to their friends, inform their friends about that topic. (Instructor 2)

> (…) these days we want them to be autonomous more so we don't give as much time as we did at the beginning of the semester (…) and in the recordings students have the freedom to act or they can refuse. They don't have to attend the recording. If they don't want, we don't make them do it. (Instructor 4)

As can be seen in the quotes above, this teacher got students to take the responsibility of their own learning through different ways such as allowing them to choose a topic to search on the net or letting them opt out of attending the video-recording or limiting the preparation time for speaking. These excerpts reveal how some teachers try to promote learner autonomy in different ways; however, their efforts may not have helped the students a lot. That is, most of the students still depend on the instructors' guidance in SP assessments as presented in item 25 and 31 (see Table 3)

When it comes to the administration interviews, they also did not bring up any effect of SPs on the promotion of learner autonomy. This might be because

they do not have the opportunity to observe or foster it directly as they are not teaching.

All in all, some teachers seem to have tried to foster learner autonomy, but it is not crystal clear that the SP makes a contribution to an increase in learner autonomy.

Instructors' and administrators' attitudes towards SPs in relation to self-reflection/self-assessment. Four instructors out of five stated some points on self-reflection either positively or negatively. While one of the teachers did not see a major improvement in this particular skill, three of them believe that the SP has made a contribution to the development of students' self-assessment skills. In fact, one instructor highlighted that students have become able to reflect upon their performances quite successfully:

> They become really aware of how they speak and …what kind of mistakes they make and what are the positive sides (…) they really have, I guess, the opportunity to evaluate themselves as English speaking people, and sometimes they notice things that I may not have noticed. ..So, this is something nice, I mean, they can notice their weaknesses and strengths and they have a tendency to go over them (Instructor 2)

Two of the instructors declared that students had problems with self-assessment at the beginning of the semester, but they managed to overcome them as they got used to it. Below are the relevant excerpts:

> Interviewer: Do you think that they can do it?
>
> Interviewee: With a little help, yes. Not naturally, because they are not used to

> assessing. The thing is, in our education system we never actually assess anything as students. So, when they come to the universities, first we start with assessing the courses and the teachers and once we do it, because it is something for the first time and we actually do a really bad job at it … Or they need actually a little bit of guidance in it. But after you actually make them see how it is done, and they understand it, they actually do a really good job, but at first, of course, it is cultural. We don't possess, basically. (Instructor 1)

> (…) after the performance, [students] felt so relieved that you know they thought they did everything well, and when they watched their performances again, they have a more realistic look at their own performances. At the beginning, the discrepancy [between the students' assessment and teachers' assessment] was big. I explained how to evaluate oneself and I gave them the criteria, we went over the criteria many times but in the second part of the program more realistic self evaluations sheets came and they are almost the same…(Instructor 5)

The quotations above reveal that the challenge in self-assessment derives from students' unfamiliarity with this new assessment method. In addition, it was declared that the problem was experienced more at the beginning of the semester. Three of the instructors seemed to feel they were able to help their students to evaluate their own performances, but one instructor noted that his/her students experienced similar problems because of their unfamiliarity with the system and some of them resisted changing despite her/his guidance for self-reflection:

> (…) they don't know themselves, they don't see themselves, they cannot see

> themselves, they have never been taught to see themselves from another perspective…You know, we guide them, this is what I expect, this is what you did and that is what you think you did. The kid still defends (laughing) what he did was ok. Because he can't really see, you know, and in order for him to be able to see, he needs to be mature… one term was not really, I think, sufficient for them to be really get that skill. (Instructor 3)

Based on the data presented above, Instructor 3 seems to have experienced a strong resistance from some students to see themselves objectively. S/he also believes, in contrast to what other instructors experienced, that one semester implementation of the SPs would not be enough to have them acquire that skill. This idea indicates that some students might need different kinds of support or guidance in terms of self- assessment to become used to the evaluation process.

Regarding the responses of the administrators on self- reflection, both of the coordinators put an emphasis on the useful impact of SPs on learners' self-reflection:

> (…)So on the next task, the student will most probably be careful about that part, so you have this role, you are the student and you perform the task and then you have another role, this time you are looking at it, I mean, from the evaluation perspective, another time you are looking at again, evaluating, but not yourself but your peer, so they all add up. I mean to the student… I mean it is very important. (Administrator 1)

> I think the burden on the students is less when they do portfolios because they have many chances to recover their mistakes or problems. (Administrator 2)

The coordinators' interviews point out the idea that students can take on different roles, such as that of evaluator, and they can improve their weaknesses

easily through self-evaluation. The administrators did not refer to any specific problems in this respect when compared to the teachers' interviews. This might be because in forming their opinions they just depended on the self-assessment papers but not on students' actual reactions observed in the classroom. The results of the instructors' and administrators' interviews are similar to the students' responses on self-reflection in that students also generally agree with the positive effect of SPs on their self-assessment skills; however, the findings also show that learners need to be trained more on the assessment criteria and this should be done at intervals to establish reliability and standardization as well as to lessen the gap between the teachers' and students' assessments.

Instructors' and administrators' attitudes towards SPs in relation to peer-feedback. In relation to peer-feedback, just two instructors reported on this aspect. Based on the teachers' perceptions, it seems that students did not benefit from peer-feedback at the beginning as they had problems with using the criteria effectively or with not being familiar with such an assessment method. Here are the two instructors' ideas on the issue that students were new to peer-feedback at the beginning and they had some problems:

> If they are not used to any other system, and they, let's say, start with a new system [e.g. the SP implementation at the beginning of the year], they did not question that much, after a few weeks, they saw that with receiving peer-feedback, giving peer-feedback is something good… because the problem is not being recorded, they have never received peer feedback in their previous education life. So, that is the biggest problem we tried to overcome (…)(Instructor 4)

> (…)if you don't train your students on giving peer feedback, they just put ticks in some random boxes, so that was a problem. First, I just gave them the sheets and I thought that the sheets were self-explanatory; I didn't feel the need to train them (…). But, still I saw that they need some training since they don't know how to assess…let's say…body language or pronunciation, so that was a problem. So, after a second or a third time, when you train them, it gets better, so you don't see many differences between your assessment and their assessment. (Instructor 5)

As understood from the teachers' ideas on peer-feedback, students had problems with this implementation at the beginning, but the teachers guided or trained them to evaluate their peers' performances better. This result is similar to findings on students' attitudes in the sense that students did not also fully agree that the SP lent them a way to benefit from peer-feedback. The administrators did not raise this issue, presumably as they did not teach and, therefore not experience it. Both the teachers' and the administrators' not mentioning this aspect a lot in the interviews seems to be parallel with the results of the student data in that they did not fully experience the effect of peer-feedback. Based on the demographic information data gathered through the first part of the survey (see Appendix 5), very few students have had experience with peer-feedback. That is, out of 77 students, just two students reported having used peer-feedback for speaking skills, two for writing skills and seven for both skills. This also shows that a substantial number of the students were not used to peer-feedback at all before they started this program.

Instructors' and administrators' attitudes towards SPs in relation to practicality. Three instructors contended that SPs require a lot of time on the part of teachers as they train students, guide them to get prepared, videotape the sessions,

and assess the performances at home. Summing up the main negative points of the time issue is this sample excerpt:

> (…)you know, it is a bit time consuming, you have to record, you have to allocate lessons for recordings and it takes a long time to record it, and to watch and to give feedback at home, then sometimes we have to watch them again to give a general feedback... (Instructor 5)

All three instructors argued that all the stages for the SP including videotaping to giving feedback all take up the teachers' class hours or their own time a lot. Therefore, two of them suggested lessening the amount of video-recording in the future.

In addition to time-constraints, just one instructor mentioned the technical problems she had during the process:

> (…)you may have some problems with the CDs, all technological devices…(Instructor 1)

As to the responses of the administrators, they also noted that the implementation is time-consuming and requires a lot of effort; however, one of them believes that it is something valid for all open-ended questions which require productive skills. Therefore, she also put forward the idea that the number of the recordings could be lowered. Below are the two coordinators' comments on time:

> … it takes time, setting up the camera, students are doing it one by one. You need to turn it on, turn it off, it takes time (…) to always record the student, it might be kind of boring (….) if I think about, for example, fifty classes and a thousand students, I don't know whether it will work, I mean this camera

> video recording issue… They might not give it up totally but they might prefer to record *some* of the performances. (Administrator 1)
>
> It is really time consuming. It takes a lot of time to record everyone, one by one. If the students had been able to do it in their own time and record their own voice, it would have been much better, faster for us. (Administrator 2)

In alignment with the instructors, both of the coordinators declared that SPs take a lot of time and effort and they came up with two solutions to this problem. The first one could be to allow students to record their performances outside the class and the second one could be to lessen the amount of videotaping, which was also put forward by some instructors.

The results of the teacher and administrator interviews do not exactly look like the findings of the students' data with regard to time-constraints. That is to say, students did not have strong ideas that SPs take a lot of time; the ideas changed from person to person. However, this aspect seems to be the major problem on the part of the instructors. This might be because teachers are also responsible for designing the tasks, monitoring students and videotaping time in class hours and also watching the recordings again in their own time. In future implementations, students could be given some additional responsibilities to save teachers' time, which also could serve to addressing the learner autonomy problems. In addition, the number of the recordings could be lowered and the videotaping might be done from time to time instead of every week to remove the burden on teachers.

Instructors' and administrators' attitudes towards SPs in relation to motivation/ anxiety. In the interviews, all the instructors made comments about the affective side of SPs as they all expressed their belief that the SP videotaping or

speaking performance causes students to be nervous. To sum up the anxiety problem observed in the SP performances by all instructors, two sample excerpts are presented below:

> At first some students were reluctant to participate in the videotaping but after a while, they got used to it and they did participate...(Instructor 3)

> (…)they don't feel stressed, at the beginning of the semester, yes, students felt stressed, and they were nervous, but in time got used to being recorded and watching themselves. In fact, they were afraid of being humiliated by the teacher or their peers but seeing that everybody makes mistakes, everybody can make fluency, pronunciation mistakes or, you know, weird actions, gestures in the recording, they corrected themselves so it helped them gain confidence...(Instructor 4)

The instructors above agree on the same point that students had some stress for the first video-recordings or speaking in front of people. However, they declared that learners coped with this challenge as they got used to it. This change was observed in the achievement exam by the instructors, too. The relevant excerpts are displayed in the following part:

> (…)So they were able to use most of the skills in the speaking exam, so I felt like it wasn't like an exam, ok, there were one or two students who were very tense but mostly they knew what kind of an exam it was going to be … and it wasn't something that they didn't know… they were speaking in class, now they are speaking in front of two people and that was the same I guess…(Instructor 2)

> (…) students are asked to demonstrate the skills they have gained, so it was not a big surprise for them and they did not feel nervous about the exam, because they knew what they were going to be asked or they were familiar with the types of questions they would be asked. (Instructor 5)

These excerpts give some indications that SP performances probably decreased the anxiety that students felt in speaking assessment as they were already familiar with the speaking assessment conducted at intervals.

Interestingly, one instructor attributed the source of anxiety not to being video-recorded or speaking English but more to deeper sources such as the personality of the student:

> Interviewer: (…) and what would be your suggestion to improve the SP use then?
>
> Interviewee: Well, the basic thing was that like I said the anxiety factor (…) maybe we should be more encouraging for the students. [They] may need professional help (…) because that is a huge problem, I gave a survey in my class. I prepared these kind of questions about how they feel when they speak, and the basic and the most common answer was that the lack of self-confidence makes it harder. And it is not about Turkish or English, it is not about how much you know. It's just the basic thing that you have to develop in yourself as a three year old or something, it is way back in them. (Instructor 5)

The instructor directly linked the anxiety problem to the personality of the student based on her/his own experience and suggested leading students having such problems to psychological support.

The administrators also agree that SPs play a huge role in increasing the anxiety levels of the stakeholders. The relevant excerpts of the coordinators are presented below:

> (…)some teachers, some people, are not technologically-oriented people so they don't like it, it might cause stress, I mean how to record it, I mean did it work properly without any mistakes, these kind of things…(Administrator 1)

> …The other one [problem] is I think is more stressful for the students, as well. (Administrator 2)

It is interesting that the administrators also observed the anxiety problem even though they did not teach in classes. The striking point hereby is that the first administrator claimed that the SP causes some stress for the instructors as well because of the technical problems. Such a finding might have emerged as the coordinators mostly deal with the teachers.

In relation to motivation, two instructors, in particular, referred to the increase in students' motivation through SPs:

> For example, when they don't understand, instead of asking for the Turkish meaning, because that was in their… in the book, they have learnt how to ask someone to repeat information. They were using that and that is also important. In their daily lives, when they use it, they make it so personalized that it becomes enjoyable for them (Instructor 2)

> (…)I personally think that that actually motivates them. Knowing that they are doing a good job, yes, but also seeing their points immediately, their faults, their errors and they get it actually…(Instructor 1)

While the first instructor noted that the SP helped students to speak English more and to have fun, the second one believes that students' feelings of success and getting immediate feedback through the use of SPs motivates them.

The results from all the teacher interviews seem to overlap with the findings of the student data in that, while most students reported having some problems of anxiety, several also mentioned overcoming this problem. As for the motivational aspect, one third of the students made a comment on the motivation derived from the use of SPs. When it comes to the instructors, they did not feel the need to comment on this aspect strongly. This might be caused by the fact that affective issues such as motivation are hard to identify and observe on the part of an outsider.

All in all, the anxiety problem seems to be very common among the stakeholders and the source of the problem could be being videotaped or students' proficiency level in English speaking. In the future, teachers could guide students more at the beginning in order to motivate students or have them get familiar with speaking assessment and speaking gambits at intervals to help reduce their fear of speaking.

Instructors' and administrators' attitudes towards SPs in relation to speaking skills. All the instructors except Instructor 5 made positive comments on the impact of SPs on the improvement of students' speaking skills. Here are some of the excerpts to show their positive attitude:

> (…)and now I have very good speakers in my classroom (Instructor 1)

> (…)and I think that it is because of these SPs in unit assignments once they learn how to pronounce the words, how to use intonation, especially good students notice that…(Instructor 2)

> (…) fluency, vocabulary, even this is difficult for me, speaking in front of voice recorder(…)You know, some students were amazing others, of course, they need time because they need more time, everybody learns at their own pace. I think for beginner level students, it was very successful. (Instructor 3)

> (…) speaking is the skill which develops, I think last, because it is very difficult to develop speaking skill and evaluating it only once or twice in a term is, you know, is not enough because they should…they should take the process into consideration. (Instructor 4)

Based on the teachers' perspectives, the findings reveal that students have made progress in speaking through the use of SPs. They improved their use of words, intonation, pronunciation and overall speaking skills as this specific skill requires some time to develop based on a regular feedback.

The administrators also agree that the students improved their speaking to a great extent by using SPs:

> (…) The SP helps the learners to see the advantages, the value of this skill I guess, now they can express themselves they can express their ideas, this is good. (Administrator 1)

> (…) and that's where they focus on their pronunciation or they learn more about pronunciation and stuff like, intonation that…(Administrator 2)

The quotations reveal that both administrators are in favour of SPs for speaking skill development. While, the first coordinator emphasized the value of speaking from the students' perspectives, the second one focused more on the improvement of pronunciation and intonation.

This result is also similar to what students expressed in their survey, and interviews. That is, a considerable number of the students also agree that they have displayed a boost in their oral performance by means of the SP.

To sum up, almost all instructors are of the opinion that the SP promotes speaking skills, including vocabulary, pronunciation, and intonation. Moreover, they think that the SP provides students with the opportunity to practice speaking on a regular basis.

Some other positive sides of SPs implementation. Based on the instructors' and administrators' interviews, some other benefits of SPs emerged. For example, two instructors alleged that video recording provided them with means for a more fair assessment, which also helped settle certain standardization problems:

> (…)I am in a one on one position with the student once more. I can just distance myself from the classroom environment. In the classroom, anything can happen, so you may get distracted, you may not focus on the student when they are speaking, but at home, when I am watching, it is just me and the student. And I have the criteria, I can pause, rewind and forward maybe, skip to the next student so I give each student equal time and equal effort. That is what I mean by fair assessment. (Instructor 1)

> (…) although you take notes, there may be things that you may have forgotten, but when you watch it the second time, I am able to give a more detailed assessment or evaluation of the student. But take notes … I cannot take very detailed notes, so there could be things that I can miss out. (Instructor 2)

These two instructors seem to favor video-recording even though it takes time

for them to record and evaluate. They prefer to have videotaping rather than having to evaluate students at the time of speaking. They rest this idea upon the fair assessment and the concentration they have while watching the video.

Another positive side of SPs was raised by an instructor who saw them as an opportunity to develop students' listening skills:

(…) they may understand the listener better, so it has an effect on listening, too. (Instructor 2)

This assumption might be possible if the students improve their speaking skills and transfer it to listening.

Some other negative sides of the implementation. Instructors have also experienced some problems with familiarizing students with SPs. First of all, three of the instructors believe that the difficulty in students' adaptation to this new assessment has some basis in the students' previous educational experiences or cultural background:

> First of all, we have the guiding activities in the books, I explained to them how to… make use of them, the activities. There were some students who had never done a dialogue activity in their lives, no pair work, at all. So, first they got used to what pair work is, how to conduct pair work activities, in dialogues they had no idea of intonation, they had no idea of, you know, stress, so you know they had to learn all those steps, and after that they did something themselves. (Instructor 4)

> I think that [self-reflection] is cultural…because in Turkish society, you don't actually think about yourself that way. (Instructor 1)

These ideas suggest that students' problems with the SP implementation are not specific to SPs disadvantages, or to ineffectiveness in the use of SPs, rather, these imply that students' problems or difficulties have deeper sources, and can perhaps be addressed through more training.

The memorization of speeches in the preparation period was also mentioned as a problem by some instructors. They also talked about some solutions they came up with for this problem:

> (….) for example some of the students did not want to leave their paper. I said ok, let's record it and you read it, but there is just one condition…after that, you have got to put the paper down and then I am going to record it again…and most of them did it, I mean first we did the recording and then they read it and then they put it away and then I said 'ok, now just tell me whatever you remember' and most of them did that quite well(…)It really worked for some….most of the students…(Instructor 2)

> (…)I had some students who had to write things down and read them for example, and I said: 'You are not speaking. You are reading out loud. There is a difference'… They lose some credits and after a while I actually took the papers away saying 'all right, you are ready… so let's take the paper'. Some student felt really nervous about this because they lost their safety blanket over there, so I had to give them blank paper to hold onto. They need something to cling on. And after that, they automatically themselves gave it away. (Instructor 1)

> (…) you know, even parroting, using the same phrases, it shows, it is a step in learning, they have to memorize some parts to use it as a step (…) there were

> some students who repeated the same sentences and I talked to those students one by one and informed them of what they should do instead. Because after two weeks, when I see a repetition in one student, I warned him or her and they had to add one more stone in the building. (Instructor 4)

The excerpts show that instructors faced the memorization problem and tried to prevent it in their own ways. Instructor 2 allowed the learners to first read their papers aloud as a kind of rehearsal, but then made them do it the second time without any papers, instructor 1 gave students some blank papers to hold, so that they felt secure, and instructor 4 allowed memorization to some extent as s/he regarded it as part of learning. However, when the problem reoccurred, s/he talked to the students personally.

It is noteworthy that in the open-ended questions some students also criticized the SP implementation for the prepared unnatural speaking performances. Clearly, some instructors tried to cure this problem, but as a whole this might imply that teachers can reduce the amount of time for students to prepare so that students will be forced to produce more natural speeches.

In addition to memorization or prepared speech problems, one administrator pointed out the standardization challenge they had at the beginning of the year; however, the coordinators helped teachers to overcome that problem:

> The thing with the standardization problem (…) because I thought we were talking about the standardization, criterion business a lot in the sessions, but when it came to the real assessment part, I mean when they really sat down, assessed the students, I guess they had some problems, but then we solved the problem, because we came together, went over the criteria and we settled the

problem…(Administrator 1)

It seems that teachers had some problems with the reliability issue in scoring but with the help of the video-recording, the coordinators tried to fix the problem. This result is also parallel to why some instructors favour video-recording even though it requires a lot of time and effort. In addition, it might also give an indication why students might have had problems with using the criteria appropriately.

In brief, students resorted to memorization while they were preparing their speeches, the instructors explored different solutions of their own, and possible ways of solving the inter-rater reliability problem among teachers were addressed through video-recording.

Conclusion

In this chapter, the data collected from student surveys, interviews done with students, instructors and the administrators were analyzed and interpreted. Further analysis, discussions and interpretation of the data will be presented in detail in the next chapter.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSION

Introduction

The aim of this study was to shed light on both students' and teachers' attitudes towards speaking portfolios (SPs). The study was carried out in the School of Foreign Languages (SFL) at Middle East Technical University (METU). In this study, a questionnaire was administered to 77 beginner level students, five of which were also interviewed individually. Some other interviews were also held to explore the instructors' as well as the administrators' attitudes towards the SP and to what extent they support the SP implementation.

The study sought answers to the following question:

1. What are stakeholders' (students', instructors', administrators') attitudes towards speaking portfolios as an alternative form of assessment in tertiary level English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes?

This chapter will present and discuss the findings and implications drawn from the data analysis in relation to the existing literature on Speaking Portfolio (SP) use and its integration into speaking classes. The findings will be presented and discussed under two headings:

a. Participants' Overall Attitude

b. Participants' Attitude with regard to Different Concepts

After the presentation and discussion of the findings, pedagogical

implications and limitations of the study will be clarified, and in light of the conclusions from this study, suggestions for further research will be made.

Discussion of the Results

The items in the second part of the student questionnaires, together with interviews conducted with focal students, the teachers, and administrators, were designed to investigate the attitudes of all groups towards the use of SPs in English lessons. The questionnaire items were categorized according to particular concepts in order to ease reporting and analysis. The categories were: overall attitude, learner autonomy, self-reflection (self-assessment), peer-feedback, practicality, motivation/ anxiety, and the improvement of speaking skills.

Participants' Overall Attitude towards the use of SP

The results have indicated that the students, instructors and administrators were all positive towards the use of the SPs in English classes. All participants thought that the advantages of using SPs outweigh their disadvantages. These generally positive reports are in line with previous attitude studies about different types of oral portfolios. In Bolliger and Shepherd (2010), Brooks (1999), Castenada and Rodriguez-Gonzalez (2011) and Danny Huang and Hung (2010), the majority of the pupils surveyed also expressed that the positive sides of an oral portfolio overwhelm its flaws.

In addition to emphasizing the advantages, instructors and also the administrators in this study put forward that the SP enable them and the students to see the progress in students' speaking skill and the positive contribution of SPs to successful assessment of speaking. Some students also claimed that they could easily

see their mistakes through the SP assessment but not in an exam. This idea is congruent with Anderson's (1998) claimed about alternative assessments, which emphasized both process (such as realizing and correcting mistakes) and products (such as grades) in learning when compared to the traditional exams, which focus solely on products. This finding is also in line with Erden-Burnaz (2011) study in the sense that the participants emphasized the opportunity to analyze and correct their mistakes in the portfolio assessments but not in exams. Apart from these findings, most of the stakeholders in this research wished to continue SP use in the future, signaling that all participants favoured this implementation.

On the other hand, there have been a few criticisms surrounding the implementation of the SPs. Both in the questionnaire and the student interviews, students raised the issue of relying largely on prepared speeches, which, they felt, caused their performance to be unnatural and unrealistic, and therefore to not reflect the reality of their speaking skill. This appears to be because many students tended to memorize their speech, as noted by both students and instructors in the individual interviews. Although students tended to memorize their speeches, instructors tried to find some solutions to prevent this problem and in doing so, to help learners to have more natural speaking performances. This result do not seem to match with the findings of Erden-Burnaz's (2011), in which participants claimed that it was in fact the traditional exams that led them to memorization more than the portfolios did. In Erden-Burnaz's (2011) research, the students also mentioned that in traditional exams, they had a tendency to use the forms that they were familiar with or they had memorized. The difference between the present study and the earlier study could have emerged because the students in this study were given one or two class hours to get prepared; so learners were able to find extra time to practice and review their

speeches both in the classroom and outside the classroom before the actual performance. This might have caused them to simply recite what they had prepared beforehand. In order to prevent this problem, Brown (2004) suggested that teachers need to encourage the use of authentic language and provide students with opportunities to initiate oral communication in the classroom, as learners do not have the chance to exploit natural language in full terms in an EFL context. The authenticity problem is not also parallel to what Chang, Wu and Ku (2005) and O'Malley and Pierce (1996) argued for the portfolio assessments. They put forward that portfolios pave the way for the authentic and realistic assessments. As students mentioned in both open-ended questions and the interviews, the memorization problem in the present study could have derived from the lack of appealing and real life topics to speak on. To overcome this challenge, O'Malley and Pierce (1996) recommended that teachers make use of real life like activities in portfolio assessment to make them more authentic.

Although the participants in this study had a tendency to favour the SP, some detailed analysis is required for each concept in the data in order to compare the ideas coming from the students, instructors and administrators and to attempt to determine the sources of any mismatches or problems.

Participants' Attitude with regard to Different Concepts

All stakeholders in this study had parallel ideas about the effect of SPs on learner autonomy. That is, they did not clearly observe the effects of the SP on learner autonomy in the process of its application. For example, while the majority of the students expressed their appreciation for being able to easily monitor their progress through SPs, and thus learning how to correct their mistakes, a substantial

number of them still felt a strong dependence on the teachers' evaluations. These contradictory views might stem from either the instructors' different approaches to promoting this skill as some of them indicated in the interviews. For instance, only one instructor gave students the freedom to participate video-recordings and one of them assigned tasks to be done outside the class based on the students' preferences. This result does not overlap with the findings of Danny-Huang and Hung (2010) as the participants in that study felt they were able to easily monitor their development by reviewing and re-submitting their recordings, hence autonomy was one of the skills they reporting having developed to a great extent. Therefore, the findings of the present study might suggest that if students are given more chances to revise their products without input from the teachers, as is done in the case of so-called 'process portfolios' (Cole et al., 2000), learner autonomy could be fostered more. In such a way, students may be able to take responsibility for their own learning and do more outside class study.

With regard to self-reflection (self-assessment), both instructors and students were of the opinion that learners were able to see their strengths and weaknesses despite having some difficulties at the beginning of the year with applying the provided criteria. Most of the students and instructors, and even the administrators, argued that the SP helps learners to gain awareness of their language learning, in particular the development of speaking skill. This result is also parallel to the other studies on portfolios. As in oral portfolio studies by Bolliger and Speherd (2010), Castenada and Rodriguez-Gonzalez (2011), Wang- Chang (2010) and in some other portfolio research conducted by Ceylan (2006) and Kılıç (2009), participants in the present study were pleased with the idea of self-evaluation and expressed their development in this particular aspect. In this study, although students reported having

acquired and developed self-assessment skills through SPs, some of them seemed to have had problems because of their unfamiliarity with the whole system or specifically with the criteria used. This difficulty might have to do with the low proficiency level of the students; that is, they could not understand the language of the criteria fully. The trouble with the criteria might also have resulted from the short training period for both teachers and students to learn how to use the rubric. Although some students complained about the hard times they had during the self-evaluation period at the beginning, the findings reveal that most of the students did eventually gain insights into how to develop their self-assessment skills with the help of the video-recordings. Most of the instructors and administrators expressed in the interviews that as learners became familiarized with the process of evaluating themselves and the discrepancies between the instructors' and the students' assessments diminished by watching the video-recordings more than once. This finding seems to imply that both teachers and students need a longer and more effective training on the use of the criteria in the future by watching the video recordings (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996). Not only would this ensure that the criteria would be clear, but it could also contribute to the students' developing of higher-order thinking skills (Brown, 2004).

A descriptive analysis of the results from the questionnaire and the interviews revealed that there is some divergence in the participants' overall reactions to peer-feedback as part of the SP implementation. In general, students found it useful to give peer-feedback and learnt to recognize their own mistakes by watching their peers' performances. The positive impact of peer-feedback seems to be dependent on individual differences such as students' personal motivation. That is, most of the students tried to learn from their peers' performances and started to notice their own

mistakes by evaluating their peers. This finding seems to be overlapping with what Anderson (1998) claimed. He suggested that peer-feedback done for portfolios enable learners with another perspective and empower their meta-cognitive skills by critical thinking. On the other hand, some other students reported that they had not benefitted from peer-feedback as they focused on their own preparation or simply did not prefer to listen to their friends during the video-recordings. The finding seems to be a little bit different from what the literature have pointed out for the use of portfolios in general. In fact, quite a lot of studies attach importance to many positive impacts of peer-assessment through portfolio studies such as promoting a collaborative environment in the classroom (Brown, 1998; Johnson & Rose, 1997; O' Malley & Pierce, 1996; Yurdabakan, 2011). The difference could have resulted from the particular focus on oral portfolios, as speaking might cause more anxiety than the other skills on the students' part and students might not have concentrated as much on the others' performances.

In the present study, it also seems that teachers have gone through some difficult times to set standards and to foster collaboration in the classroom. This challenge in SPs could have stemmed from the instructors' different approaches to peer-assessment. That few teachers report on peer-feedback might mean they could not benefit from the advantages of peer-feedback mentioned in the literature. That is, the instructors were not able to evaluate more than one student at a time and to handle, at least to some extent, the problems of subjectivity and reliability in oral assessment.

To fix the problems experienced, O'Malley and Pierce (1996) and Yoshida (2001) recommended teachers set criteria together with students to involve them in the process more actively, so that they could prevent learners' indifference to their

peers' performances. It also seems that teachers could assign some other roles or responsibilities to the students to work collaboratively (Yurdabakan, 2011) since students might have gotten bored with listening to their peers' speeches or conversations in group work during the preparation stage. It might also be a good idea to engage the audience into the speaking performance by allowing them to ask questions or comment on their peers' speeches; hence, as Brown (2004) suggested, meaningful and authentic communication could take place. In such a way, students can both get more motivated and also feel relieved to speak confidently among their peers, and the memorization problem could also be sorted out to some extent.

When it comes to practicality, all participants in the present study had some concerns over the issue. On the part of the students, it is apparent that some had some difficulty in evaluating themselves and getting prepared for their performance, which took a lot of time; on the other hand, instructors also seemed to have spent quite a bit of time on videotaping, giving feedback and watching the recordings later on- a point also mentioned by the administrators. Although videotaping helped to document students' artifacts for reflection or feedback on visual aspects as emphasized by Stefanakis (2002) and Yoshida (2001), it seems to have also caused practicality problems. This problem identified in the present study has confirmed the claims of Stefanakis (2002); that is, to prevent the practicality problem on the teachers' part, students could be assigned with recording so that the burden on the teachers could be lowered. This solution might also enable students to take charge of their learning responsibility by videotaping (Johnson & Rose, 1997). Alternatively, to make the SP implementation more effective and efficient, the recordings could also be uploaded onto a blog or a website, so that students can also re-submit their works easily after making revisions on their common errors.

In relation to motivation, few instructors or students were convinced that the SP contributes to the students' motivation to speak in the classroom more actively. The reason for this failure to spark motivation could derive from the fact that the tasks did not appeal to the learners or the students did not get involved in the process of setting goals or planning their own learning as argued by Johnson and Rose (1997). It is surprising that the topics focused on during this particular case of SP implementation were mostly based on personalization of the subject matter, which were intended to involve different experiences of the students. Yet still, some of them made complaints about the repetitiveness of the topics to speak on or listen to in the survey and the interviews. To help resolve this potential problem, it would be good if teachers asked for students' ideas on the topics at times or gave them some other responsibilities to engage them more, such as by letting them talk about their personal aims or reflections and record them (Johnson and Rose, 1997; Yoshida, 2002).

In relation to anxiety, it has been a common observation among all stakeholders that the learners have experienced a fair amount of anxiety. In the present study, it seems possible that the students' anxiety derived from their peers' attitudes towards them. This possible reason is parallel to what MacIntyre and Thivierge (1997) put forward; that is, audience attitude plays an important role in speakers' anxiety. Therefore, teachers might make use of peer-feedback with less focus instead of referring to all aspects of the speech as in the criteria. In such a way, the students' anxiety level could be lowered and they could have the feeling of success as the students could observe that people may make manageable mistakes and can compensate for them. Another common idea among stakeholders is that students felt tense at the beginning of the year. They also added that as they had

become familiar with the implementation, the problem was fixed to a certain point and students gained some self-confidence. Even though the perceived anxiety appear to have been low, the questionnaire and interview results imply that students still go through some problems with anxiety. When looking into the previous research, the findings here with regard to motivation/anxiety are similar to those in Wang-Chang (2010), in which the apprehension level of the portfolio group was found to be a little bit lower after the use of video-portfolios. On the other hand, the finding of the present study is different from what Danny Huang and Hung (2010) revealed. In this research, the students' speaking fear was found to be quite low and diminished even further after the use of oral portfolio. This might imply that should students be given the responsibility to revise and re-submit their recordings as many times as they wish outside the class- as in most of the e-portfolios- they could easily shape their own progress (Baron & Boschee, 1995) and become less nervous as in Danny Huang and Hung (2010). In this way, the theoretical framework for the portfolios, that is constructivism, could be achieved in full terms by resting the learning process upon the individual needs rather than the standard, regular assessment done on a weekly basis as in SPs.

Based upon the findings, it seems that all participants strongly agreed that the SP made a great contribution to improving speaking skills. The present study reveal the perceived result that students can use a wide range of vocabulary, correct pronunciation and intonation through the use of SPs. This finding is in line with what most of the studies has explored on different sort of oral portfolios (Bolliger and Shepherd, 2010; Brooks, 1999; Castañeda and Rodríguez-González, 2011; Danny Huang and Alan Hung, 2010; Wang and Chang, 2010). In these studies, the participants were found to perform better when compared with either a control

group's performances or their own first experiences (before the treatment of portfolios) in terms of speaking skill. Similarly, in the present study, students appear to have reinforced and found an opportunity to practice what they have learnt in the course book regarding the grammatical structures, vocabulary items, pronunciation and speaking strategies depending on the teachers' reports. However, it might be good to give them the chance to make some changes on the topics suggested by the book. In this way, students could have been more interested in their peers' performances and also they might have much more familiar with natural speaking gambits (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996). Another benefit that was noted related to speaking skills was that students view SP studies as an opportunity to practice speaking rather than as simply an assessment method. Similarly, teachers shared the same opinion that it was an opportunity for students to practice and for them to see their development. This is an interesting finding in the sense that students have experienced some anxiety but still they have attached an importance to the SP as a way of their speaking improvement. This might be caused by the fact that all portfolio implementation offers an opportunity to compensate what has not been fully internalized or learnt rather than just assess and leave the students alone (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

Apart from the categories determined beforehand, some other results have also emerged from the data. One of the outstanding results is that instructors have experienced problems with standardization as pointed out in the literature (Ekbatani & Pierson, 2000; Erden-Burnaz, 2011; Mabry, 1999; Yurdabakan, 2011). According to the administrators, instructors also had problems with using the criteria, so there was a discrepancy between the grades of the classes in terms of grading the first performances. Most probably, the reason for the students' difficulty in assessing

themselves at first can also be attributed to the teachers' difficulty with using the criteria appropriately. Fortunately, the video-recordings have helped the instructors to establish the inter-rater reliability. This experience is parallel to the suggestion of Kitao and Kitao (1996) that recordings are useful for standardization. Therefore, for future reference, the recordings could also be of great benefit to the students, helping to train them to use the criteria and evaluate themselves more objectively.

Pedagogical Implications

The analysis of the data and the findings of the study suggest some pedagogical implications for the instructors, administrators and test developers. One of the main findings is that SPs was found to be beneficial for overall development of speaking skills. As students find little opportunity to speak outside the class, such an alternative assessment could be recommended as a tool to perform better in speaking skills. Interestingly, students do not seem to regard this assessment as a kind of testing but rather as an opportunity to practice and improve their oral skills. Therefore, SPs might be used effectively to teach and compensate for the weak points of the learners' speaking skills as in process portfolios (Cole et al., 2000).

Despite being useful for oral skills, SPs need to be prepared carefully. One of the striking implications emerging from the present study is that having students deliver prepared speeches have caused them to resort to memorization, so it is better for instructors to design speaking activities in which students speak spontaneously or contribute to the speakers' speech by asking questions or commenting on them. In such a way, authentic communication could be encouraged in an EFL classroom to some extent, and thus more natural speeches could take place. On the other hand, it is more probable that students could get nervous if they give spontaneous speeches. At

this point, a balance between prepared speeches and spontaneous ones needs to be found in the implementation. In this way, students can build upon their own path at their pace as suggested by constructivist theories (O'Malley & Pierce, 1996).

In addition to their contribution to the oral skills, SPs were also found to be useful for the improvement of specific aspects such as the promotion of learner autonomy. That is, students reported that they had observed their progress easily and taken responsibility for their own learning by choosing their products for their SPs. On the other hand, instructors and administrators did not report this aspect as much as students did in the interviews. This finding could have resulted from the fact that teachers had more responsibilities than the students did in this process. Considering the difference between the ideas of the participants, learner autonomy might be achieved in full terms on the condition that instructors and program developers can offer some opportunities to the students to do research for their speeches beforehand. They can also ask students to review their products after their performances by allowing them to keep the DVDs for a longer time and to re-record themselves. As suggested by Ceylan (2006), teachers should not necessarily leave the learners completely on their own in the name of fostering autonomy but could have them decide on certain points as setting their aims, conducting the videotaping, or monitoring their own strengths and weaknesses more. In such ways, the SP implementation could fully realize socio-constructivist classroom implications by considering the individual differences and involving the learners in the process more (Mabry, 1999).

Another specific implication of the SP implementation is the improvement in self- assessment skills of the learners, which also paves the way to learner autonomy as students gain more responsibility (Kılıç, 2009). As illustrated in the findings of the

present study, SPs could be employed to improve students' reflection skills at the tertiary level. However, students need to be trained a little bit longer before they get assessed, which could be done through video-recording conducted from time to time in the classroom. Alternatively, students can record their own performance to foster practicality as well as self-reliance skills.

Yet another significant implication about the use of SPs could be that students might be encouraged to evaluate their peers' speaking performances by contributing to the SP speeches since they mentioned they have learnt a lot from their peers. However, it might be useful to make the audience comment on the speeches positively. In this way, both the speakers as well as the audience can overcome their anxiety by speaking for different purposes other than their own performances. In addition, as peer-evaluation is not a component of the assessment, some students and some instructors might have not paid much attention to their peers' speeches. Therefore, the instructors and program developers can integrate peer-feedback as a part of an assessment grade to give incentives for the students.

Another implication derived from the study is about the use of videotaping. Although it demands a great deal of effort on the part of the teachers, a majority of the students seem to be happy with watching their performances later and thus being able to reflect back on their speech. Moreover, as some of the instructors and the administrators mentioned, the video-recording could enable them to establish inter- and intra rater reliability as just writing down the feedback without recording the students' performance could put a barrier to fair assessment in the classroom.

It is interesting that students do not seem to regard this assessment as a kind of testing, and they also seem to be less anxious and more motivated to speak in

English classes as the time passed. However, for future reference, the topics to talk about could be asked to the students to involve them more in the decision making process, so that they can become even more motivated and autonomous (Baron and Boschee, 1995). Instructors who wish to increase motivation and decrease the amount of anxiety in their EFL classrooms can make use of such portfolios rather than traditional assessment methods by allowing students to record themselves as much as they wish. In this way, learners could get accustomed to be videotaped.

To sum up, the SP could be of great benefit to EFL students, instructors, administrators and program developers to teach and assess oral skills since speaking is one of the crucial projections of what a student has achieved and how much they could actively use the language components such as vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation (Khamkhien, 2010). With some adaptations on the implementation, the SP could also be beneficial to promote self-assessment, peer-feedback and motivation to speak as seen from the positive ideas of the stakeholders in this study.

Limitations of the Study

One of the major limitations of the study is that pre and post attitudes towards the SP implementation were not explored so the collected data were unable to examine the changes in stakeholders' attitudes. In addition, an experimental design could not be set to investigate the differences between traditional speaking tests and SP studies, in particular for the improvement of speaking skills. Another limitation was that the results are limited to beginner level students, as it was difficult to implement such a big change in the curriculum for a semester in other levels without the permission of the institution. Lastly, if the data had been collected from other contexts such as private universities, primary or high school levels varied advantages

and disadvantages of SPs could have emerged.

Suggestions for Further Study

In further studies, a pre and post test could be administered to explore a change in stakeholders' attitudes towards SPs. In such a way, the changes, if any, with regard to learner autonomy, self-reflection, peer-feedback, practicality, and motivation could be tracked. Future studies can further explore the students' speaking performance in an experimental design to compare the traditional method and alternative assessment. In such a research study, the effect of both methods on oral skills could be revealed more objectively. In order to increase the authenticity of the speeches, which has been identified as a problem in the present study, both spontaneous and prepared speeches could be added to the SP implementation. In this design, the motivation/ anxiety of the learners could be examined in depth. Moreover, longitudinal case studies to shed light onto the long-term effects of SPs could be carried out to compare the students placed in regular beginner groups and the SP groups at the beginning of the year as this study is based on a one semester (15 week) implementation. In a further research, the effect of SPs on self-confidence, as stated by some participants, could also be investigated. Lastly, by allowing students to video-record themselves and uploading on a webpage or a blog, the implementation of oral portfolios with regard to the advantages and the disadvantages could be explored in depth in future studies.

Conclusion

The present study has provided information about the Speaking Portfolio (SP) implementation in a Turkish state university preparatory program. It has reflected the attitudes of students, instructors and administrators with regard to overall attitude,

learner autonomy, self-reflection, peer-feedback, practicality, motivation/ anxiety and the improvement of speaking skills. The results have showed that the majority of the stakeholders believe in the usefulness of SPs especially in terms of self-reflection, peer-feedback and improvement of speaking skills. Moreover, they are of the opinion that learners could more effectively compensate for their mistakes and monitor their progress in speaking through SPs than they can in the traditional achievement exams. Additionally, the instructors think that despite some anxiety and practicality problems, they wish to continue with such an assessment format in the future since it enables them to go back and evaluate the learners' performances much more fairly and reliably. Based on the participants' reports, motivation stemming from the SP implementation could be increased and students' self-confidence could be boosted while speaking as they become accustomed to the practice. In addition, as both portfolio implementation and speaking assessment have become common in Turkish education recently, there is an implication for a more learner-centered approach to promote speaking skills in an EFL context in the future. As the stakeholders become familiar with the SP implementation and as necessary actions are taken beforehand, they seem to get more benefit out of such an alternative assessment to develop one of the most challenging skills in language learning. Lastly, even though there could be a few students who might totally reject the use of SP, the overall results indicate that this kind of alternative assessment has been accepted and appreciated by students, instructors and administrators for its overwhelming advantages.

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