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A CASE STUDY: EFL LEARNERS' AND WRITING TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PERFORMANCE BASED PORTFOLIO IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

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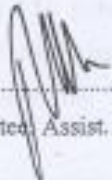**Assist. Prof. Dr. Hülya YUMRU**

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ÖZET
ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN VE YAZMA DERSİ ÖĞRETMENLERİNİN PERFORMANSA DAYALI PORTYOLYAYA KARŞI TUTUMLARINI İNCELEYEN BİR DURUM ÇALIŞMASI

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Bu çalışma yabancı dil öğrencilerinin ve yazma dersi öğretmenlerinin performansa dayalı portfolyaya karşı tutumlarını araştırma amacıyla gerçekleştirilmiştir**.** Çalışmada hem niteliksel hem niceliksel veriler kullanılmıştır. Niteliksel veri oluşturma sürecinde öğretmen gözlem kâğıtlarından yararlanılıp öğretmen ve öğrenci röportajları gerçekleştirilmiştir. Niceliksel veri oluşturma sürecinde ise Brooks (1999) tarafından geliştirilen bir tutum anketi kullanılarak öğrenci tutumları araştırılmıştır. Bu çalışmanın katılımcılarını 89 üniversite öğrencisi ve 5 yazma dersi öğretmeni oluşturmaktadır. Araştırma sonucunda elde edilen bulgulara göre yazma dersi öğretmenlerinin ve röportaj yapılan 10 öğrencinin büyük bir çoğunluğu portfolyo değerlendirmesine karşı olumlu bir tavır sergilerken yapılan genel ankette bu bulgular tam tersi yönde gelişmiştir ve öğrencilerin büyük bir çoğunluğunun performansa dayalı portfolyoya karşı tutumlarının olumsuz olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yazma Derslerinde Performansa Dayalı Portfolyo, Öğretmen ve Öğrenci Tutumları

ABSTRACT

A CASE STUDY: EFL LEARNERS' AND WRITING TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE PERFORMANCE BASED PORTFOLIO IN A UNIVERSITY CONTEXT

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This study has been carried out to investigate the attitudes of students and writing teachers towards the performance-based portfolio. In the study, both qualitative and quantitative research methods have been used. Within the process of qualitative research, teacher reflection papers have been used and interviews with the teachers and students have been made. Within the quantitative research process, an attitude survey designed by Brooks (1999) has been used and the student attitudes have been investigated. The participants of the study are 89 university students and 5 writing teachers. In the light of the findings obtained from this study, it has been concluded that the majority of the writing teachers and the interviewed students have a positive attitude towards the performance based portfolio while the findings from the student attitude survey displays the opposite. According to the findings from the general attitude survey, the majority of the students show a negative attitude towards the performance-based portfolio.

Key words: Performance Based Portfolio in Writing Classes, Teacher and Student Attitudes

ABBREVIATIONS

EFL   **:** English as a Foreign Language

ELT   **:** English Language Teaching

PBA   **:** Performance Based Assessment

SPSS   **:** Statistical Package for Social Sciences

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

CHAPTER II

CHAPTER III

CHAPTER IV

CHAPTER V

CHAPTER I

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Introduction

Chapter one starts with the background of the study and continues with the statement of the problem and purpose of the study. It is followed by the significance and limitations of the study. Operational definitions are also identified in the last part of the Chapter.

1.2. Background of the Study

Assessment has a major role in teaching. Evaluating learners' performances in an effective way is as crucial as putting the methods and approaches to teaching into practice. How should learners be assessed? This is an age old but still an important question, because experience and research tell us that assessment impacts what is taught and learned in classrooms. Students spend a great deal of time reviewing information, and instructors spend a great deal of time teaching and assessing. The field of assessment has been given a special emphasis especially in recent years when the need for a more effective assessment system has been realized. In the past few years, there has been a shift of interest from classical assessments to alternative assessments. In parallel with this paradigm shift, teacher and students roles have also undergone certain changes. Today, teachers are not the sole authorities and learners are no longer passive recipients of the language. Instead, teachers are facilitators who guide the learners and facilitate the whole learning process and learners are active involvers that make discoveries and develop their own strategies for their learning. Knowles (1970) highlights the active role of the learners by stating that learners perceive education as a process of developing competence to achieve their full potential in life. They want to be able to apply to what knowledge and skill they gain today to living more effectively tomorrow. People are performance centered in their orientation to learning. The active role of the learners in the learning process has led to an increasing popularity of the use of performance based assessments in classroom practices.

Performance based assessment is an alternative form of assessment which moves away from traditional paper and pencil tests. The significance of performance based assessments comes from the fact that PBAs are ideal assessment tools to evaluate one's

real performance. In other words, they are vital to assess what a student can really do in a process in which the learners are actively involved.

As a result of the increasing need for performance based assessments, portfolio assessment, which is an alternative to traditional teaching, has gained popularity. As to what Pett (1990) asserts, portfolio assessments are authentic assessments that are performance based, realistic and instructionally appropriate. Portfolio assessment is defined as 'a purposeful collection of student work that shows student's efforts, progress and achievements in more than one era' (Paulson, Paulson and Meyer 1991, p.61). In literature, portfolio assessment has proved to have a variety of benefits for learners. Paulson, Paulson and Meyer (1991) states that:

> An application portfolio is a visual representation of who you are as an artist, your history as well as what you are currently doing. It is representing you when you are not present. Part of the evaluation of a portfolio is based on the personal choices you make when picking pieces for the portfolio. It tells the school something about your current values; that's why you will rarely get a school to be very specific about what they look for in a portfolio. You should not be afraid to make choices (p. 2).

Kohonen (2000) also puts forward that portfolio assessment offers new possibilities by making learning more visible to learners. This visibility enables learners become aware of the wide range of goals and learning outcomes.

In general, the literature highlights the autonomous, authentic and performance based nature of the portfolio assessment. Although the benefits of the portfolio assessment model have been proved in literature, some challenges along with those benefits have also been observed. The time consuming, difficult to monitor nature of the portfolio assessment and the issue of reliability can be listed as the main challenges of the portfolio assessment. Cirneanu and Chirita (2009) point out the disadvantageous nature of the portfolios by stating that it is not easy and quick to assess since learners reflect their creativity and originality in their works. Bakı and Birgin (2004) also stress that the reliability of portfolios can increase only when there is a specific, clear and measurable assessment criteria for each item. On the other hand, when the purpose and assessment

criterion is not clear and specific, the portfolio cannot show learners' achievement accurately.

1.3. Statement of the Problem

Despite the increasing popularity of performance based assessments (PBAs) and the existence of a remarkable number of researchers who are in favour of their use in classrooms, it has also a few disadvantages which makes the use of performance assessments difficult in certain cases. Portfolio assessment has also similar problems due to its performance-based nature.

Due to these problems and limitations, many teachers hesitate to use PBAs in their classroom practices. There are also a remarkable number of teachers who still don't know how to use it. In some cases, this hesitation stems from the differences between the perceptions and attitudes of teachers towards the concept of assessment. Also, although the issue of PBAs has been highly debated for the past few years, there is an absence of student responses on PBAs in literature. Thus, this study reflects the perceptions and the attitudes of teachers and students to contribute to the responses in literature.

1.4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the attitudes of writing teachers in EFL writing classes and reflect the attitudes of students in EFL writing classes towards the use of performance based portfolio.

1.5. Significance of the Study

The positive role and impact of portfolio assessment on language learning and assessment process is clear and proved. However, the use of portfolios also bears various challenges along with the benefits. Accordingly, the perceptions of the learners and the teachers vary. For some students, for example, portfolio assessment could be time consuming or for some teachers, portfolio assessment could be difficult to monitor especially in a crowded classroom. In this study, the attitudes of students and the teachers towards the performance-based portfolio will be investigated in a university context. Thus, the study is specific to Toros University context and has its own challenges and advantages. The results of this study will be beneficial for Toros

University as all the staff including the teachers, learners and administrators will benefit from the revealed data from this study. Besides, this study will contribute to the prior studies in the field of assessment by examining the teachers' and students' points of view. By examining the students' points of views towards the use of portfolios in EFL writing classes at Toros University, this study will also contribute to the student responses on the use of performance assessments that are limited in literature. The research questions driving this study were:

1. What are EFL students' attitudes towards the use of performance-based portfolio in writing classes?

2. What are EFL teachers' attitudes towards the use of performance-based portfolio in writing classes?

1.6. Operational Definitions of the Study

Assessment: Assessment is the process of collecting and discussing information from a variety sources in order to develop a deep understanding of what students know, understand, and can do with their knowledge that they gained through their educational experiences (Huba & Fred, 2000).

Performance Based Assessment: A performance-based assessment is employed to measure students' academic achievement by evaluating their performance in a hand on task (Glossary of Education, 2004).

Summative Assessment: Summative assessments are assessments that determine what students know and do not know. They are given periodically at a particular point in time. (Garrison & Ehringhaus, 2007).

Formative Assessment: Harlen & James (1997, p.369) describe the formative assessment as "Formative assessment, therefore, is essentially feedback both to the teachers and to the pupil about present understanding and skill development in order to determine the way forward."

Portfolio: A portfolio is "a purposeful collection of student work that shows student's efforts, progress and achievements in more than one era" (Paulson, Paulson and Meyer 1991, p.61).

Writing Apprehension: Writing apprehension is "a collection of behaviors that include a writer's tendency to avoid situations that involve writing, to find writing

unrewarding, to fear having one's writing evaluated, and to develop increased anxiety over having one's writing viewed in a public forum" (Mabrito, 2000, p.41).

Constructivist Theory to Learning: Constructivist theory to learning is "a constant reinterpretation, a constant reweaving of the " web of meaning" (Vygotsky), a constant reconstruction of experience (Dewey) as human beings consciously evolve new social practices to meet human needs, to adapt to and transform their environments" (Russell, 1993, p. 179).

Autonomous Learning*:* Autonomous learning, also called student–centered learning or flexible learning (Taylor, 2000) relates to the change in focus in the classroom from the teacher to the student (or from the teaching to the learning). This is based on a constructivist theory of learning whereby each individual student constructs their own understanding based on their prior knowledge and current learning experiences (Kember, 1997).

CHAPTER II

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter presents the theoretical basis of the study. It starts its focus with a shift from teacher centered to student centered learning then moves on self efficacy and writing, writing assessment, performance based assessments, portfolios, types of portfolios, portfolio as an alternative assessment tool then continues with the pros and cons of the use of portfolios and ends with the student attitudes towards the use of portfolios in the literature.

2.1. Assessment: A Shift from Teacher Centered to Student Centered Learning

In the past few decades, approaches to language assessment and learning have changed with an emphasis on a student centered and classroom based language assessment. Within this process, language teachers undertake several roles that are significant in the assessment process. Stoynoff (2012) highlights the need for language teachers to reflect their own assessment practices since there is not enough research conducted on the assessment of young learners. Andrade and Huff; et al. (2012) emphasize the key role of the student centered self-assessment by stating that student centered assessment can improve learning and motivation. They also indicate that student centered approaches to learning offer active engagement and self-management which are considered to be crucial to learning. Moskal (2010) puts forward that self-assessments are indicators of learners' motivation, satisfaction and self-efficacy. Hancock (1994) highlights the role of self-assessment and claims that there is a need for a new assessment initiative in education which highlights the importance of performance, competence and self-assessments.

Allwright (1988) claims that there is a great quality of learning when the control over learning occurs in the mind of the learner (as cited in Hancock, 1994). The learner autonomy, as a new and highly credited notion, plays a key role in the 21st century in the field of assessment. Learner autonomy is directly related to the self-assessment of individuals. Little (2000) stresses the importance of learner autonomy by stating that autonomous learners are active involvers of the planning, monitoring and self-evaluation processes. Köse (2006) also asserts that when learners have some idea of

what, why and how they are learning, they can accept responsibility for their own learning.

2.2. Self Efficacy and Writing

"He just sits there and does nothing. He is just not motivated" is a comment frequently heard in the classrooms of early adolescents, often in relation with the tasks involving writing (Klassen, 2002, p.173). Lack of motivation is a major problem especially in early stages of school. Hence the role of self-efficacy and other motivational beliefs need to be highlighted to enhance the improvement of writing skills. As to what a report by the National Commission on Writing in America indicates (Harris and Graham, 2002), providing children with support from early stages plays a crucial role in developing an effective writing policy. Graham and Harris (2002) assert that providing children with support in early stages rather than until later grades helps identification of writing problems. According to the social learning theorist Bandura, individuals have self-beliefs that help them control their thoughts, feelings and actions (as cited in Pajares, 2003). In this view, Bandura highlights the importance of the key features of human behavior and motivation beliefs that people have about their capabilities. Bandura (1986) suggests that children's beliefs about their capabilities are as important as the knowledge they have. He (1986) also adds that those self-beliefs have an influence on their attitudes towards their future (as cited in Pajares 2003).

During the past two decades, self-efficacy has become a very important predictor of students' motivation and learning. Bandura (1986) suggests that self efficacious students work harder, participate more and have fewer negative emotional reactions when they encounter problems than do those who have some concerns about their capabilities (as cited in Pajares, 2003). Research findings have indicated that writing self-efficacy and writing performances are related. According to Pajares (2007), writing self-efficacy foresees writing outcomes and mediates between previous and following successes in writing. Most writers, especially writers of a second language, have writing apprehension. Writing apprehension can be defined as ' a collection of behaviors that include a writer's tendency to avoid situations that involve writing, to find writing unrewarding, to fear having one's writing evaluated, and to develop increased anxiety over having one's writing viewed in a public forum' (Mabrito, 2000, p.41). Masole (2013) asserts that most people are anxious about writing and they don't consider

themselves as writers. She dwells on the need to avoid writing apprehension and encourage writing self-efficacy. She adds that a person is obliged to believe his / her ability and knowledge so as to produce effective writing.

2.3. Writing Assessment

Writing is a constructivist process in which writers try to make meaning of the world by their own experiences. This makes writing assessment complicated since more than a set of single sentences is needed to construct meaning. Graves (1999) states, "Every study of young writers I've done for the last 20 years has underestimated what they can do. In fact, we know very little about the human potential for writing" (p.99).

The nature of writing skill is not only tough for the writers but also many teachers. Many writing teachers feel concerned about teaching writing due to the inadequate preparation programs, which give limited knowledge for teachers on how to teach writing. Huot (1996) asserts that teachers have doubts about assessment practices in writing as they think the real values of writing are not reflected. As what Hillocks (2002) suggests, writing has complicated mental functions and they are not easy to be assessed by objective tests. He also claims that the formulaic nature of the objective tests apparently ignores the importance of planning, drafting, revising and editing parts of the writing process. According to Crusan (2013), writing is both important and complex due to the struggle of putting words together on paper. Many writing instructors in both English and English as a second language experience difficulties in the assessment process and they are expected to take on responsibilities and roles on that.

Writing assessment has always been a core of study in writing. The history of writing assessment dates back to 1950. However, it wasn't called assessment then. Rather, it was called testing. According to Yancey (1999), the history of writing assessment can best be summarized in three main waves. These are waves that move forward and those that don't. The first wave came out as objective tests. Second wave took the form of holistically scored essay and the third was portfolio assessment.

The effects of standardized writing assessment have been discussed and searched for decades. Many of the conducted studies reveal that standardized tests have a negative impact on writing ability. Cooper and Odell (1977) assert that such examinations do not measure the writing performance. The only reason behind the preference of such

examinations might be placement or the criterion measure. Cole, Ryan, Kick & Mathies (2000) also state that traditional tests are inefficient assessment tools to display the multidimensional features of the students' knowledge (as cited in Tangdhanakanond & Wangwanich, 2012).

Brown (1999) puts forward that only a small number of students' knowledge and skills are assessed in higher education and they are provided with the same kind of activities each time (as cited in Winter, 2003).

As to what Professor George Hillocks (2002) suggests, most standardized tests are inefficient in improving writing ability. Hillocks surveyed the usage of standardized tests. He surveyed the application of the standardized tests in Illinois and Texas. During the study, writing teachers relied on a formulaic five-paragraph structure, which caused a negative effect in student writing. Hillocks (2002) suggests that kids are just following the structures and they are graded for those structures rather than for the real evidence and supports for their points when standardized tests are practiced. He adds that when portfolio was used as an assessment in Kentucky, artistic, creative and expressive writings came out.

It is a tough task to assess writing. Many writing instructors in both English and English as a second language experience this difficulty in their assessment processes. Crusan (2013) highlights the difficult nature of writing assessment and suggests that assessing student writing poses a problem for a variety of stakeholders such writing instructors, the writing program and the administrators. Crusan (2013) adds that the process itself is painstaking. Crusan (2013) adds that many teachers try to avoid being involved in the assessment of writing since they regard it out of their circle of influence.

2.4. Performance Based Assessments

In recent years, there has been a shift of emphasis from classical assessments to alternative assessments. This increasing emphasis on alternative assessment has resulted in an interest in performance-based assessments. Brandt (1998) stresses this increasing popularity of PBAs pointing out that by the end of the 20th century, performance assessments had shifted from a trendy innovation to an approved way of teaching and learning (as cited in Wren, 2009). Dwyer (1999) points out that there has been a remarkable change witnessed in the field of assessment. He maintains that, within that change process, standardized multiple-choice tests are out. Constructivist theories, the

rise of multiple intelligence theories and new social trends all led to the radical change in traditional approaches of assessment. However, there have also been a few concerns about the use of PBAs, which are in many ways different from the most widely used forms of assessments. Lai (2011) states that performance based assessments have a long history with prior successes and failures. There are a variety of definitions available for performance-based assessments. According to one definition, PBAs are authentic tasks that assess what a student knows and can do (Sweet, 1993). Sweet (1993) briefly states that PBAs give the learners the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge as the learners are actively involved in the process. For this reason, PBAs are regarded as vital sources to assess what a student can really do. In regard to this definition, Hein and Price (Hein & Price, 1994 as cited in Nesbit et al., 2004) state, "Assessing science through paper and pencil tests is akin to assessing a basketball player's skills by giving a written test. We may find out what someone knows about basketball, but we won't know how well that person plays the game" (p.100).

Adamson & Darling Hammond (2010) give special emphasis on the real nature of the performance, which is regarded to provide the learners with real assessment, as cited in the following:

> One demonstrates his or her ability in the real world by applying knowledge and skills in settings where there are no pre-determined options. A person balances her checkbook; buys ingredients and cooks a meal; reads an article in the newspaper and frames an opinion of the argument; assesses a customer's worthiness for a mortgage; interviews a patient, orders tests, and diagnoses the nature of his or her disease, and so on. Even in the context of school, the typical learning activity involves a mix of skills and culminates in a complex performance: a persuasive letter, a group project, a research paper, a first down, a band recital, a piece of art, etc. (p.3).

According to the other definition obtained from the Office of Educational Research and Improvement of the US Department of Education (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1993 as cited in Wren, 2009), PBA is a form of testing which equips the learners with a variety of tasks to perform rather than a set of ready- made lists. Although there is a variety of aforementioned concerns about the use of PBAs,

performance based assessments are also highly favored for some reasons. As to what Adamson & Darling Hammond (2010) put forward, performance based assessments are efficient in assessing skills that are difficult to assess. Among those skills are oral arguments and research projects that are highly credited by educators and employers of the 21st century.

Hancock (2007), on the other hand, suggests that learners find performance assessments more motivating (as cited in Lai, 2011). There have also been several arguments in favour of PBAs that stress the major role of PBAs in the process as well as the product. Baron (1991) stresses out this role claiming that PBAs are complex structures that make the evaluation of both process and product possible (as cited in Lai, 2011). One of the common points the researchers have about the use of PBAs is that PBAs promote metacognitive skills such as critical thinking, analytic and creative skills which are regarded as vital in the 21st century world. Caffrey (2009) claims that this form of assessments are more suitable for evaluating skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, innovation and collaboration which have all been perceived as the skills of first priority of the 21st century. Frederiksen (1984) also claims that PBAs are best suited to assess students' knowledge and skills such as writing and critical thinking. He also points out that, unlike traditional forms of assessments, PBAs offer a form of assessment at a deeper level. Palm (2008), on the other hand, maintains that PBAs offer better possibilities to assess complex competencies and communication which are inevitably needed in today's society, in the information age, (as cited in Wren, 2009). Similarly, Adamson & Darling Hammond (2010) suggest that students need to know how to synthesize, use and assess the knowledge in new contexts. They stress that learners should also be well equipped in the fields of communication, design and problem solving. Another point that most researchers have agreed on is that PBAs offer the institutions, teachers and administrators opportunities to promote occupational growth. It is commonly believed that PBAs do this by giving a clear picture of what students know or do not know. Sparkling (2000) believes that PBAs provide a meaningful framework for the institutions, which could result in an institutional change. Adamson & Darling Hammond (2010) support this point articulating that as teachers get more involved in the assessment process, they become more knowledgeable about how to cope with challenging standards.

While performance based assessments are being given special emphasis in the assessment process and are known to play a major role in the alternative assessment process, some of the teachers have a few concerns about the use of PBAs. They hesitate to use and implement them in class due to various reasons. The issues such as high cost of implementation, the low level of validity, reliability and generalizability could all be counted as shortcomings that make the use of PBAs in classrooms challenging. Dunbar et al. (1991) claims that these limitations stem from the scoring of PBAs by humans with a certain amount of error (cited in Lai, 2011). He also suggests that direct assessments of performance needs careful sampling of tasks and an acceptable level of score reliability and validity (cited in Lai, 2011). Similarly, Caffrey (2009) claim that validity is, unquestionably, the most important element in evaluating educational assessments. He (2009) also adds that validation is not a set of procedures. It actually requires a careful investigation. As to what Dwyer (1999) asserts, PBAs are difficult to administer, more time consuming, not easily standardized and have a relatively little knowledge scope. He states that all these features limit the use of PBAs and lead to a hesitance by the teachers to implement them in classrooms. Similarly, Wren (2009) suggests that although developing scoring rubrics is an attainable goal, applying the standards consistently might be considered as a challenge for teachers. Gewertz (2008) supports this claim stating that assessing students' 21st century skills is tricky (as cited in Wren, 2009).

2.5. Portfolios

The term portfolio derives from the Latin verb 'portare' that means to carry (Sharp, 1997). In literature, there are a variety of definitions available for portfolios. Paulson and Meyer (1991) define a portfolio as "a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the students' efforts, progress and achievements in one or more areas of curriculum" (p.60). According to Mc Donald (2012), a portfolio usually includes selected samples of students' best efforts. Mc Donald (2012) also claims that portfolios are efficient tools in keeping track of changes over a period of time and encourage the learner for self-directed learning. According to Snavely and Wright (2003), "a portfolio is a teaching tool which helps the development of language skills of the student" (p.3). A portfolio is also defined as a regular and well-conducted collection of a student's works that can be considered as the direct evidence of a student's a achievements,

efforts and advancement throughout a period of time. Caner (2010) suggests that portfolio assessment as an ongoing process gained interest in the field of teaching. He also asserts that portfolio assessment aims to involve the learners in an active decision making process and make them independent thinkers who can settle the individual problems they face. In the rationale for portfolios given by the Pacific Northwest College of Art, it is stated as:

> An application portfolio is a visual representation of who you are as an artist, your history as well as what you are currently doing. It is representing you when you are not present. Part of the evaluation of a portfolio is based on the personal choices you make when picking pieces for the portfolio. It tells the school something about your current values; that's why you will rarely get a school to be very specific about what they look for in a portfolio. You should not be afraid to make choices (as cited in Meyer and Paulson, 2003, p. 2).

Meyer and Paulson (2003) claim that portfolios reveal many things about their creators. They are like a window into the students' heads. In addition, learners take responsibility of their own learning when portfolios are used as encouraging educational tools.

2.5.1. Types of Portfolios

Over the past a few decades, there has been a shift of interest from the classical assessments to alternative assessments (Linn & Dunbar, 1991). As a result of this shift, new waves of assessments have arisen. Among those new waves are authentic and performance based measures (Lankes, 1998). Accordingly, one of those new assessment measures, portfolio, has become increasingly popular. There is a variety of ways that portfolios can be used. The types of portfolios range vastly depending on their functions (Lankes, 1998). Lankes (1998) asserts that there are basically six types of portfolios. The first type is developmental. In the developmental portfolio process, a teacher can have the student keep a developmental portfolio so as to record his / her improvements in writing or mathematics throughout a school year. This portfolio includes samples of the student's work and a few self-evaluations of specific assignments. The second type is a proficiency portfolio. It can be used to prove mastery in a subject area. In the

proficiency portfolio process, the students are expected to show mastery in certain fields such as community service, science and technology, ethics and social issues. The third type is a showcase portfolio. This portfolio presents a student's best work during an entire year of education. The fourth type is teacher planning. It is possible for teachers to use this type of portfolio to receive information about a class of students. This way, teachers can have the opportunity to have an understanding of their students' capabilities prior to the start of the school year and they can make their plans accordingly. The fifth type is employment skills. This portfolio is related with business. It can be used to evaluate the work readiness skills of a prospective employee. The sixth type of portfolio is college admission. This type of portfolio can be used for admission to college and universities.

Kilbane and Milman (2003) report that there are three main types of portfolios: assessment portfolios, learning portfolios and presentation portfolios. Assessment portfolios are used to evaluate learners' level of skills and knowledge regarding the specific units of learning. A learning portfolio is used to ensure self-assessment and planning for ongoing professional development (Kilbane and Milman, 2003).

Campbell et al., (2007) puts forward that presentation portfolios are more flexible collections of evidence on a specific content matter (as cited in Mills, 2009). They are commonly used for job interviews, performance reviews, etc. Tillema (2001) claims that three types of portfolios can be identified: the performance dossier type portfolio, the reflective learning portfolio and course related learning portfolio. Performance dossier portfolios are tools used to record work performance. A course related learning portfolio puts special emphasis on learning experiences according to the course standards. According to Sharp (1997), portfolios can be classified in three main types: writing portfolios, learning portfolios and self-reflective portfolios. The writing portfolio focuses on writing as a craft. It contains drafts of paper essays and in class writing exercises. The learning portfolio puts special emphasis on writing as a method of learning. It contains journal entries, readers, response papers, collaborative projects, etc. The self-reflective portfolio highlights self-development and personal identity. By keeping self-reflective portfolios, learners have the chance to describe their own identities and reflect how they were influenced by their own experiences. In short, the types of portfolios differ according to their functions. Whatever the type of a portfolio is, it contains self-assessment and progress of an individual. A portfolio includes

compiled information about individuals and can help the educators have an idea of their individual accomplishments.

2.5.2. Portfolio as an Alternative Assessment Tool

As aforementioned before, there is a shift from traditional assessment to alternative assessment practices. According to Anderson (1998), traditional assessment is based on a set of beliefs related to assessment. Traditional assessment practices regard assessment as a passive process in which the process is separated from the product. They also focus on discrete, isolated piles of information. However, alternative assessment meets the learners' needs by revealing information about learners' life and experiences. According to Shaaban (2001), an efficient assessment acts as a diagnostic tool that provides the learners with feedback and information about the weaknesses and strengths of the students. Recent educational developments such as constructivism and multiple intelligence theories have increased the need for an assessment that includes both the learning process and product. The alternative assessment is more concerned with an educational process and constructivism. Murphy and Torreance et al. (1988) highlights the constructive feature of the assessments and suggest that what students have gained bears importance within the educational process.

Nowadays, one of the alternative assessments that can meet this need is portfolio (Birgin and Bakı, 2007). Birgin and Bakı (2007) also suggest that in the 21st century, students are required to have cognitive skills such as problem solving and analytical thinking.

2.5.3. Advantages of Using Portfolios as an Assessment Tool

In the present context of the Romanian education system, reorienting towards a building process based on labor market necessary competences, the assessment of the learners' performances is perceived as a learning regulation- self-regulation process. Cirneanu, Chirita (2009) suggest that the learners aim to set their own individual goals when they are engaged in the self-regulation process.

There is a variety of theoretical research that recommends the use of portfolios in EFL classrooms. This is because of the recent shift of emphasis from content learning to process focused learning and self-regulation. In this approach, it is not the teachers but the learners who play an active role in the diagnosis of their weaknesses and strengths.

Köse (2006) claims that students monitor their progress and goals for their future studies and realize their own strengths and weaknesses when they are directly involved in portfolio assessment. Nunes (2004) asserts that the use of portfolios in the EFL classroom promotes active participation of students. Cirneanu & Chirita (2009) also think that portfolios are vital assessment tools in promoting teacher- learner communication perspective. They add that portfolio assessment acts as a business card of the learners in that learners are asked to monitor their progress in a cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral field over a long span of time. In addition to this, portfolios are " pedagogic portraits" of the learners. They demonstrate the training, interests, skills, the capabilities and difficulties encountered. Cirneanu and Chirita (2009) give detailed information on the advantages of using portfolio as an assessment tool by classifying the advantages as:

a. It is a flexible instrument, adaptable to the discipline, class and terms of the activity.

b. It allows the assessment and evaluation process of some products of the leaner activity that are usually overlooked.

c. The assessment of a portfolio is free of tensions and negative feelings that most traditional forms of assessments have. Therefore, it is not stressing but motivating for the learners.

d. Portfolio assessment develops the self-assessment capabilities, which results in more self-reflexive learners.

e. Learners are actively involved in their own assessment process.

f. It provides an overall view on the learner's activity over a period of time.

g. It valorizes the creative potential and fosters the originality by its inter active nature.

h. It excludes mark based learning and the speculation.

i. Within the portfolio assessment process, teachers are considered as counselors rather than sole authorities in the classroom. This reduces the stress for the teachers and the learners (p.26).

Köse (2006) puts forward that the use of portfolios also helps the students with weaker language skills build up their self-esteem. Kingore (1995) claims that the parents can also benefit from the assessment process as portfolio assessment raises awareness of the parents about their child's needs (as cited in Tangdhanakanond and

Wangwanich, 2006). Nunes (2003) adds that by using portfolios in EFL classrooms, the teacher has not only the chance to diagnose the learners' skills and competencies but also become aware of their preferences, styles and learning strategies. It is obvious from a set of researchers that portfolio assessment contributes to foreign language learning and teaching. However, as to what Nunes (2003) asserts, the development of portfolios should follow two main principles. The first one is that it should be dialogic and facilitate an ongoing interaction between teachers and students. She maintains that portfolio assessment should be perceived as a continual progress rather than a one session handed in at the end of the academic year. Conrad (2008) maintains that learners are equipped with cognitive skills when they are involved in the portfolio process as they collect their works carefully and reflect on them. Conrad (2008) also adds that the increase of interest in the use of portfolios can be explained by society's exploration of the self-trends in the western world and the recent formation of a strong technological society.

What makes a portfolio assessment significant is its key role in both formative and summative assessment. As portfolio assessment helps students monitor their self-development and promotes useful feedback, it plays an active role in the formative assessment process (Driessen et al., 2005). Its role in the summative assessment is also obvious for two reasons. One reason is that only formative assessment is beginning to lose momentum and another is that it offers a chance to identify students who are falling behind in their professional progress (Driessen et al., 2005).

Language learning involves a number of learning outcomes that are essential for the development of language. Kohonen (2000) asserts that outcomes in language learning can be promoted by portfolio assessment. According to her, portfolio assessment offer new possibilities for the learners by making some of the language more visible to students, teachers and other stakeholders. By this visibility she means that teachers can make their students be aware of the goals and learning outcomes related to the language learning enterprise. Portfolio assessment, when combined with classroom activities, enhances student's self- discipline and responsibility and it helps students to gain self-evaluation skills. Bakı & Birgin (2004) also maintain that portfolio assessment helps assessing the students as a whole by providing visual and dynamic proofs about students' interests, skills, successes and development over a period of time. Mullin (1998) points out that portfolio assessment provide the teachers with new perspectives

in education (as cited in Bakı & Birgin, 2004). In sum, portfolio assessment provides more authentic and valid assessment of students' achievement and performances.

2.5.4. Advantages of Using Portfolios Tool as an Assessment

Although the use of portfolios in EFL classrooms has a number of advantages, it also has some disadvantages and limitations. Bakı and Birgin (2004) stress that the reliability of portfolios can increase only when there is a specific, clear and measurable criterion for each item. On the other hand, when the purpose and assessment criterion is not clear and specific, the portfolio cannot reflect students' achievement accurately.

Birgin (2006) stresses out the disadvantageous nature of the portfolio by stating that using portfolio in a crowded classroom is very time consuming for teachers to score students' works. Additionally, data from portfolio assessment can be difficult to analyze due to the qualitative data constraints. Keeping, handling and monitoring portfolios in a crowded classroom is a constraint.

Another important disadvantage of portfolio assessment is its low reliability scores. To overcome this problem, rubrics based on clearly set criteria need to be used within the portfolio assessment process (Bakı and Birgin, 2004). Cirneanu and Chirita (2009) maintain that the disadvantage of the portfolio is that it is not easy and quick to assess since the learners reflect their creativity and originality in their works. Davis and Pannamperuma (2005) assert that when portfolios are used for summative assessment, students may be reluctant to reveal weaknesses. As portfolios are personal documents, issues of privacy and confidentiality may arise when they are used for assessment. It is also difficult to decide whether the work submitted belongs to the learner. They add that a huge amount of paper work is involved in the portfolio process. Winter (2003) maintains that portfolios as an assessment format can be very impractical and bulky if the principle of selectivity is ignored. Moya and Malley (1994) claim that the positive potential of portfolio assessment is tempered by some negative considerations. They consider the issue of validation as a major concern. As the portfolio assessment model is involved in a qualitative assessment process, establishing its validity is comparatively more difficult than those quantitative approaches. Defining the criteria and standards used for the portfolio assessment can also be considered as a second concern. According to them, standards must reflect the holistic nature of language development must be

sensitive to individual student differences and must measure the student progress accurately. Thus, it needs careful planning.

Delanshere and Petrosky (1989) highlights the limitations of the portfolio process by pointing out that objective rating of portfolios is difficult due to the qualitative, non-standardized nature of portfolio assessment which includes different teaching contexts. According to them, assessors should not misinterpret the information on the criteria. Gannon et al. (2001) puts forward that there is a negative correlation between the use of the portfolio assessment and the honesty of entries, which naturally reduces its validity and credibility as an assessment tool. Mitchell (1994) states that due to the anxiety of the students about the nature and amount of the evidence, together with the time consuming aspect, portfolio assessment can have a negative impact on students' motivation. Snadden et al. (1996) and Karlowicz (2000) claim that there is also a general reluctance by the students to engage in self-reflection and the focus on weaknesses as well as strengths. Thus, the students may find it difficult to involve themselves into self assessment process although they have the opportunity to identify their gaps in knowledge or skills by the help of self reflection and assessment process.

2.5.5. Student Attitudes Towards the Use of Portfolios in the Literature

Thinking critically, learning to solve problems and working and communicating with others are the skills that are required from the learners of the languages in an era of the information age. As the focus of the portfolio assessment is those cognitive skills that are of great importance in the 21st century, the attitudes of the language learners are considered vital, too. In the literature, a number of studies have been conducted to find out the attitudes of language learners towards the use of portfolio assessment. However, there is little research conducted to investigate the use of portfolios with EFL students. As Song and August (2002) underline, the debate related to issues raised by portfolio assessment is rich in literature; however, it has not been endorsed much by quantitative research.

Barootchi and Keshavarz (2002) conducted a study to find out whether portfolio assessment contributes to learners' achievement or not. Regarding this purpose, they compared two EFL classes' writing assessment scores. In one of the classes, the instrument was "teacher made tests" while in the other it was portfolio assessment. The

findings of their study reveal that portfolio assessment contributed to Iranian EFL learners' success positively.

Another study was conducted by Yang (2003). Yang first conducted a pilot study with a class of 45 college students. The data on the students' beliefs and attitudes was collected by an open ended interview and a Likert type survey. The findings indicate that the majority of the students viewed portfolio assessment as a useful tool in learning English and evaluating their performance. Caner (2010) conducted a similar study to investigate views of prep school students towards portfolio assessment in their writing courses. The participants of the study were 140 EFL students in the intermediate and upper classes at the School of Foreign Languages of Anadolu University. A portfolio attitude survey and semi structured interviews were used to collect data. The results indicated that the subjects of this study generally preferred to be evaluated by the traditional paper and pencil tests; however, most of them believe that portfolio assessment contributes to their learning processes, too. According to Caner, the reason behind that might be that the students are not fully aware of the advantages of the portfolio assessment. In another study carried out by Davis and Pannamperuma (2009), a questionnaire with open-ended questions was used to obtain feedback from the students at the University of Dundee Medical School, Scotland over a span of four years. According to the findings of the study, students' reactions to the portfolio assessment were initially negative but then over the four years, their attitudes turned out to be positive. They agreed that portfolio assessment ensured reflection on their work. Similarly, Çimer (2011) conducted a study to report on student teachers' views of portfolios. Student teachers' written reflections provided a basis for the study. The data indicated that a majority of the student teachers initially thought the portfolio process as time consuming and extra burden but later on they all found out that the process was useful and enjoyable. Accordingly, they participated more to their classes. In Brook's study (2009), an attitude scale was given to the learners to find out their attitudes towards the use of portfolios as an assessment tool. In the light of the findings, it was concluded that learners viewed portfolio assessment as an opportunity to look back at previous work and reflect on it.

CHAPTER III

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

In this chapter, the methodology of this study is presented in detail. First, the description of the research design, the participants of the study and the instruments of the study are presented. Then, the data collection procedure is described.

3.2. The Research Design

The aim of this study was to investigate EFL students' and writing teachers' attitudes towards the use of portfolio in EFL writing classes at Toros University. Although the targeted participants to the study are university students in EFL writing classes, some writing teachers are also included to support the study. Within this framework, this study provides an overview about the positive and negative attitudes of the students and the teachers towards the use of portfolio at a university context.

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. Quantitative methods were used to obtain a concrete and analyzable data on the student attitudes. Qualitative methods were also used to support the statistical data provided. Qualitative and quantitative methods are known as two main research designs. As Hopkins (2008) states:

> A quantitative research is all about quantifying relationships between variables. You express the relationship between variable using effect statistics, such as correlations, relative frequencies, or differences between means. Studies aimed at quantifying relationships are of two types: descriptive and experimental. In a descriptive study, no attempt is made to change behavior or conditions—you measure things as they are. In an experimental study, you take measurements, try some sort of intervention, and then take measurements again to see what happened (p.1).

In the study, reflection papers from teachers (see Appendix 4) and interviews with students (see Appendix 2) and teachers (see Appendix 3) provided the qualitative data

while the Likert type student attitude scale (see Appendix 1) on the use of portfolio provided the quantitative data.

3.3. Participants

The researcher selected participants from Toros University Preparatory School. The participants to this study were 89 students who were taking EFL writing classes, 10 students from each writing class and 5 writing teachers at Toros University.

3.3.1. Characteristic of the Participants

In the study, the targeted participants were 89 students from six EFL writing classes. As modular system is used at Toros University, those students involved in the study were at elementary level. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in this study. A qualitative research with five writing teachers was also conducted to give support to the findings of the study. Data from the teachers were added with the belief that it would enrich the conclusions drawn from the study. The ages of the students ranged between 19 and 21. There are six EFL writing classes at Toros University. The teacher participants were the teachers of these six EFL writing classes. The researcher also taught writing in one of these six classes so she was involved in the study, too. 10 student participants were also selected randomly for the student interview.

3.4. Data Collection Tools

Both qualitative and quantitative research designs were used in the study to investigate the attitudes of students towards the use of portfolio in EFL writing classes. In the process of quantitative research, a portfolio attitude survey that was designed by Brooks (1999) was applied to six EFL writing classes with 89 students. The original attitude survey was not used in the study. Instead, the researcher adopted the original attitude survey. The adopted version of the attitude survey was applied as a post study at the end of the module. Ten questions were asked in the survey and a five point Likert attitude scale was used. In the process of qualitative research, two different interviews were conducted to investigate the attitudes of students and teachers towards the use of portfolio. One was conducted with the students and the other was with the teachers. The interviews were also conducted as a post study at the end of the module (8 weeks). The interviews were semi- structured and open-ended questions were asked. In the interview

for students, 5 questions were asked whereas in the interview for teachers, 8 questions were asked. Apart from the interviews, as a part of the qualitative research, reflection papers were collected from five writing teachers. Before the implementation of the study, 5 writing teachers had been asked to record their observations over a span of eight weeks (a module) on those reflection papers. Accordingly, the data from the reflection papers were also gathered. Reflection papers helped the teachers gain an understanding of the content of the research and guided the interview process with the teachers.

3.5. Data Collection Procedure

In the data collection procedure, as a first step, the administration of Toros University Preparatory School was informed that a case study would be carried out by the researcher in six EFL writing classes. As a next step, writing teachers of six writing classes were informed about the content of the study. They were informed that the study would be conducted over a span of one module (8 weeks). Then, the teachers were provided with reflection papers and they were told that they were supposed to record their observations on student attitudes towards the portfolio assessment in their classes on those papers over a span of 8 weeks. In each reflection paper, there were parts such as name of the class, name of the performance writing task, students' feelings (positive or negative), problems identified and their personal comment and attitude. The researcher gathered the reflection papers at the end of one module (8 weeks). Following the data obtained from the reflection papers, a quantitative study was conducted on 89 students in 6 writing classes. Each writing teacher gave a five point Likert type attitude survey which had been designed by Brooks (1999) and adapted by the researcher to his or her own class at the end of the module. The researcher was also one of those five writing teachers. Thus, she also gave an attitude survey to her own class. Accordingly, the data were gathered from each writing class. Next, two different interviews were made: One with the five writing teachers and one with the students to investigate their perceptions about the use of portfolios. The interview for students was conducted with 10 students from each writing class. The participants were selected randomly. The interview for teachers was conducted with five writing teachers. There were six writing classes but five writing teachers were interviewed, as one of the teachers was the teacher of two writing classes. A semi-structured interview was designed by the

researcher and made with the students and teachers at Toros University. Once the qualitative and quantitative research analysis procedure was completed, all data from reflection papers, portfolio attitude survey and the interviews were brought together for further analysis.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data obtained from the performance based portfolio attitude survey was analyzed by using SPSS. The data from the survey was interpreted using a five point rating scale from "strongly agree", "agree", "don't know", "disagree" and to "strongly disagree". The percentages, frequencies and related statistical data were obtained through SPSS. For the analysis of the reflection papers and the interviews, categorization was made to conduct content analysis.

CHAPTER IV

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter presents the findings gathered from the reflection papers, the teacher and student interviews and a student attitude survey. The aim of this study was to find out the attitudes of the EFL students towards the use of portfolios in writing classes. The findings of the study are presented in four sections. First, the findings gathered from teacher reflection papers (Section 4.2.) are provided. Then, the findings elicited through teacher interviews (Section 4.3.) and student interviews (Section 4.4.) are discussed. Finally, the findings from the student attitude survey (Section 4.5.) are presented.

4.2. Findings from Teacher Reflection Papers

This section presents the findings gathered from the reflection papers, which were kept by the six writing teachers. First, the teachers' and the students' perceptions regarding the advantages of keeping portfolios are discussed (section 4.2.1.) and then the problems that the teachers and the students experienced are pointed out (section 4.2.2.).

4.2.1. Advantages of Keeping Portfolios

The teachers reported several advantages of portfolio keeping in their writing classes. For example, Teacher 1 stated the following when reflecting on its advantages:

Students know what they should do. They plan and rewrite their paper and revise according to the feedback they receive. They like portfolio keeping. They feel great when they see that they are learning. They are also getting used to keeping portfolio and they understand the importance of it.

For Teacher 1, as pointed out in the above quotation, students perceived portfolio keeping especially beneficial as it provided them with the opportunities to plan what they intent to write in advance and monitor their self-improvement which are the most

important writing strategies to become effective writers. Moreover, Teacher 1 explains why his personal overall attitude as a writing teacher is also positive as in the following:

> *My personal comment is that portfolio keeping is a good process for students. They learn from their mistakes. I believe that their writings will improve significantly after process writing and portfolio process since they monitor their own progress. The students are getting better each day. As they get better for writing, my job also gets easier. They make less mistakes than before. It might be difficult to grade the papers over and over for me but I can see the students' progress, which makes me feel comfortable.*

Similarly, Teacher 2 marked on the general student attitude as positive for each week:

> *They are generally positive regarding the process writing approach and the portfolio keeping.*

The overall personal attitude of Teacher 2 is also positive as reflected in the following:

> *Portfolio keeping process creates a more disciplined atmosphere in the classroom and urges them to write in a more organized way. With the help of process writing approach and the portfolio keeping, the students have the chance to organize their ideas in a logical order and perfect their grammar stage by stage. In the process, students' writing anxiety decreases to some extent and their awareness and motivation increases accordingly. By the help of portfolio keeping process, students revise their writings and can reflect on it. They become familiar with the style of writing they focus. They get useful feedbacks from their teachers. Not only a specific type of writing, but their overall writing develops.*

As stated above, for Teacher 2 keeping portfolios raise students' awareness on the fact that writing is a process and that in this process they need to organize their ideas

first, that they need to revise their writing papers according to the feedback they receive from their teachers. Teacher 2 also points out that students' level of motivation increases as they become more aware of the cycles of the writing process.

Reflections elicited from Teacher 3 were similar to those gathered from Teacher 1 and Teacher 2 with regards to the general student attitudes towards keeping portfolios. Yet, we observed one additional function of the writing process pointed out by her and that was related to the emergence of the metacognitive strategies namely the ability to monitor and evaluate one's personal growth:

They can see their progress. They start to understand the good outcomes of process writing. They got used to the process and they don't complain anymore. They revise their papers according to my feedback. They love the process. They are very happy about the results.

For Teacher 4, "The whole process is very beneficial and it affects the students positively and motivates them. It helps the students learn about their own mistakes." Teacher 4 also pointed out the students' use of metacognitive strategies by the help of portfolio keeping. To support her own point of view, Teacher 4 stated, "The majority of the students think that the process helps them see their mistakes. The process was beneficial as most of the students fulfilled the procedure and learnt a lot from their mistakes. They feel that they have the second chance to correct their papers."

Teacher 5 marked on the student attitudes in the rest of the weeks as positive by stating:

Students began to realize that they would get benefit from the portfolio keeping process. They learnt about their mistakes and how to correct them. Students are more willing to apply methods they have learnt and keep portfolios. Especially in week 7, having mastered a numerous pieces of writing, the students feel more confident and enthusiastic about writing and keeping portfolios. The students were generally responsive throughout the process.

When reflecting on the general student attitudes towards keeping portfolios, Teacher 6 stated the following:

The majority of the students are very enthusiastic about keeping portfolios. They bring their portfolio assignments each week. They seem motivated throughout the process. They feel better when their second drafts are better than the first drafts. The students gain confidence as the process goes on. Their anxiety about writing also decreases, as they don't have weekly writing exams, which allow them to write only once and be graded on it.

Teacher 6 articulated three main benefits of portfolio keeping: (1) that it helped students to have an experiential understanding of the processes involved in writing, (2) that it helped students to become organized persons, (3) that it helped students to become aware of their strengths and weaknesses as writers. The following quotation taken from Teacher 6 summarizes her point of view as a writing teacher:

The process writing and portfolio keeping process give the learners the second chance. They have time and the opportunity to plan, revise, rethink and even criticize and reflect on their works based on the feedback they received from their teachers. They also learn how to be well organized. The students need to be alert throughout the each step of the process in order to correct their mistakes, organize the style of their paragraphs and understand the areas they are strong or weak at.

4.2.2. Disadvantages of Keeping Portfolios

Despite the advantages involved in using portfolios, the teachers identified some problems that have to be settled in future teaching practices. The first and the most difficult problem to handle was the new role that was to be adopted by the learners. For this reason, the students had difficulty in responding to the requirements of this new role at the beginning of the program. Teacher 3 and Teacher 5 stated the following with regards to this point:

Teacher 3:

Students are trying to understand their responsibilities. The process sounds difficult to them. They seem confused and they are not happy about it. They don't want to write the same paper again and feel that it is an extra burden on them.

Teacher 5:

Focusing on new techniques in the first place caused some boredom in the classroom and a sign of a burden and heavy load coming towards the students, especially after one month term holiday.

The second problem as cited by four of the teachers was about students' unwillingness to rewrite their papers after receiving feedback. For students rewriting the papers with necessary corrections was a burden. The following teacher reflections indicate the teachers' experiences and observations related to this concern:

Teacher 1:
Some students are reluctant to write again after their first drafts. Some students forget to bring their first drafts.

Teacher 5:
Some students feel bored and de-motivated during the process.

Teacher 6:
They are also bored with writing their drafts again and again. Some students find it time consuming and perceive the process as a burden.

The third difficulty the students experienced was related to correcting their errors. Teacher reflections revealed the reasons why the students found correcting errors difficult. The first reason was related to the error correction symbols used by the teachers. That is, the students sometimes had difficulty in understanding what those symbols meant. The second most suffered difficulty was the high number of mistakes to

be corrected on papers. Finally, it was not easy for some students to find out their own mistakes. The teachers' observations cited in reflection papers were as in the following:

Teacher 2:
After the feedback or correction of their paragraphs with error correction symbols, they have difficulty in self-correction.

Teacher 4:
Some students find it difficult to find where their mistakes are and correcting them.

Teacher 6:
Some students tend to feel discouraged by the error correction symbols. They feel that they have many mistakes to correct.

The fourth problem the teachers had to deal with was related to forming in the students the habit of keeping portfolios and bringing them to the language classes when necessary. The following quotations taken from reflection papers reveal the teachers' experiences regarding this point:

Teacher 2:
Some students expressed that portfolio keeping made them feel tired.

Teacher 4:
They are bored with keeping their homework in their portfolios and forget to put them in their portfolios.

Teacher 5:
Some students keep forgetting their portfolios.

Teacher 6:
Some students find it time consuming and perceive the process as a burden.

4.3. Findings from Teacher Interviews

Interviews were conducted with 5 EFL writing teachers throughout the process in order to get a better understanding of the student attitudes towards the use of portfolios. Having observed the students over a span of 8 weeks through the reflection papers, the teachers were expected to answer eight questions regarding the use of portfolios. Accordingly, the findings gathered through teacher interviews are presented in eight sections.

4.3.1. Previous Experience with Portfolio

Within portfolio keeping process, teacher awareness is equally important as student awareness. In the process, the teachers play important roles as facilitators. Therefore, they are expected to have the necessary knowledge and awareness on the portfolio process. Within this framework, in the interview, the first two questions were asked to have an idea about the competency level of the teachers over the portfolio keeping process. One of the interview questions was: *"In your previous studies, how much experience did you have with performance based portfolio as an assessment?"*

Regarding this question, two teachers reported that they had previous experience with the performance-based portfolio. One of them had 2 year and the other had one-year experience in performance based portfolio. The latter was the researcher.

4.3.2. Definition of Portfolio

In the portfolio keeping process, the role of the teachers is unquestionably important. Some teachers are familiar with the concept of portfolios whereas some others are new in their profession. The interview conducted with the teachers included both experienced and inexperienced teachers to have an understanding of their point of views towards the use of portfolios. Accordingly, they were asked to give the definition of the portfolio. The related question was: *"How do you define a portfolio?"* The teachers gave various definitions of portfolio. Three teachers out of five described it as a process as shown in the following quotations:

Teacher 1:

Portfolio is a process, which involves process writing and letting students learn about their mistakes

Teacher 4:

A portfolio is a long process, which requires the students to assess themselves and correct their mistakes so that they can have the best work they can do.

Teacher 5:

A portfolio is a process in which the students are expected to correct their mistakes, reflect on and collect their written works.

These teachers also highlighted the fact that portfolios can be used as learning tools as they help learners to monitor and evaluate their own progress in writing. However, there were two teachers who only emphasized the dossier function of the portfolio. Those teachers mentioned the following when describing their understanding of portfolio:

Teacher 2:

A portfolio is a file that demonstrates the students' progress.

Teacher 3:

A portfolio is a collection of written documents of student homework.

4.3.3. The Students' Overall Attitude

This study was mainly conducted to investigate the attitudes of the EFL students towards the use of portfolios as an assessment. However, it is the teachers who are also active participants of the process. Regarding this, the teachers' perspectives about the students overall attitude were also included in the study. The teachers were interviewed after a comprehensive observation of the student attitudes in each EFL writing class. They all reported that the student attitudes were generally positive despite the fact that they underwent some problems throughout the process. The related question was: *"Having observed the students for a span of 8 weeks, do you think the students' attitudes towards performance based portfolio are positive or negative?"*

Teacher 1:

Generally, their attitudes were positive.

Teacher 2:

Yes, they really loved the process.

Teacher 3:

The majority of the students had positive feelings about the portfolio keeping.

Teacher 4:

Their attitudes were of course positive.

Teacher 5:

The overall attitudes of the students in my class were positive.

As stated above, the teachers articulated that the students were generally not negative about the portfolio process.

4.3.4. Objectivity of Portfolios

The effective use of the portfolios in the classroom bears a significant importance. However, the assessment of the portfolios is also regarded as significant in the portfolio keeping process. Thus, one of the interview questions was asked to find out whether the portfolio assessments were made objectively in the classrooms. The related question was *"Do you think portfolio assessment ensures objectivity in class? If yes, why? If no, why not?"*

Regarding this question, the teachers interviewed all agreed that the portfolio keeping process ensures objectivity in the classroom. They articulated that although the process itself is carried out by the individual works of the students and the student works are evaluated individually, there are some common standards that make the process objective. They reported that the criteria used in the assessment process are standard and the same for all students. Additionally, they reported that the teachers monitor every step of student progress regularly and all the students are involved in the process equally without bias.

Teacher 1:

Yes, it does. Students write their assignments on their own and the teacher gives personal feedback to each student. There is a standard evaluation criterion for all students so it ensures objectivity in the classroom.

Teacher 2:

Yes, it does because each student has his or her own work. Their writing teachers can objectively evaluate the students. The teachers also use standard evaluation criteria in the grading process for each student, which also ensures objectivity in the classroom.

Teacher 3:

Yes, it does. In a class with a portfolio as an assessment, the teacher has the opportunity to observe each and every step of each student individually and that ensures objectivity.

Teacher 4:

Of course, it does. With portfolios, we can have student papers in our hands and we can measure their writing skills according to the papers objectively. It has also standard evaluation criteria.

Teacher 5:

Yes, it does because in the process not only one student's progress is important but all the students' progress are equally important and monitored regularly by the teachers. There is no bias towards the students. The evaluation criteria and grading process is also standard and transparent.

4.3.5. Problems Identified

Although all the five teachers interviewed had a positive attitude towards the portfolio keeping and they believed that their students in general had a positive attitude, they articulated that they identified some problems throughout the process in their classrooms. The related question was: "*What problems have you identified throughout*

the process writing and the portfolio keeping process?" The answers to this question varied so the analysis was made in different subcategories that can effectively be summarized as losing portfolios, unwillingness to write, extra burden and the necessity of keeping portfolios.

Some teachers articulated that the students showed the tendency of losing their papers and portfolios within the process, which resulted in extra work for the teachers and loss of time for the students. Some others articulated that the students displayed an unwillingness to write the papers over and over. They were usually the ones who lost track of their own progress. They felt lost and overwhelmed throughout the process. Accordingly, their level enthusiasm and interest displayed a significant decrease.

Teacher 1 reported that he encountered the problem of losing papers and portfolios in their classrooms. Similarly, teacher 5 reported that the students lost their papers and they had difficulties during the portfolio checking process due to the absence of some drafts.

Teacher 1:

They lost their papers. They had to write their papers again and I had to grade their papers again.

Teacher 5:

Some students lost their first drafts and when it was time for the portfolio check, most of their works were missing.

Throughout the portfolio keeping process, the writing teachers adopted the process writing approach. The process writing approach required the students to correct their mistakes and keep their first and the final drafts together in a file. This process is, by its nature, complicated and requires special efforts of the students. Therefore, at some point, the students could lose their enthusiasm and feel tired with the long process. Three of the teachers interviewed pointed out the loss of enthusiasm of the students towards writing by stating that:

Teacher 2:

Some students are unwilling to write their papers again. They don't show any interest and enthusiasm.

Teacher 3:

Some students could not keep track of their portfolio homework so they lost their interest in writing.

Teacher 5:

It was difficult to encourage the students who did not make any effort to write. They were very indifferent to the writing as a skill.

Some students feel that the process writing approach and portfolio keeping gives them extra burden. They usually find it difficult to revise and write their paper again and again. Teacher 1 and 4 reported similar problems in their classes by stating that:

Teacher 4:

Some students think that portfolio keeping gives the student extra burden as the module system itself is very complicated and tiring.

Teacher 5:

Some of my students didn't keep track of their portfolios as they felt overwhelmed by the overload of work.

One teacher reported that some students don't believe in the necessity of keeping portfolios:

Teacher 1:

Some students don't believe the necessity of portfolio, especially the ones who don't do their homework regularly.

4.3.6. Strengths and Weaknesses

The efficient use of the portfolios by the language learners is believed to help the learners learn about their strengths and weaknesses. With regards to this belief, all the teachers articulated that the portfolio keeping helps the students learn about their weaknesses and strengths. The related question was: "*Do you think portfolio keeping process help students learn about their strengths and weaknesses? If you say yes, in what way?*"

Teacher 1:

The portfolio keeping process helps students learn about their weaknesses and strengths because the students see their mistakes and reinforce what they have learnt.

Teacher 2:

Yes, it does. Students can easily see their strengths and mistakes and this helps them improve their writings faster. They also get encouraged when they see their improvements. They become happy with the results of their own works

Teacher 3:

Yes, it does because the teachers give proper feedback based on evaluation criteria and the students see their weak and strong sides in their writings and they try to decrease their mistakes with the guidance of the teachers.

Teacher 4:

Yes, especially with the responsible students, the process definitely helps them observe their steps of improvement. They lessen their mistakes and they increase their performance accordingly.

Teacher 5:

Yes, it does because the teachers give regular feedbacks and if the student is weak at one area, he or she tries to improve his or her works but if the

student is strong enough in a skill, he or she goes on the way she does her
works and feels more confident and safe.

As they stated above, the teachers share the common belief that keeping portfolios is efficient in showing the learners the areas they are strong or weak at. They all reported that once the students learn about their mistakes and strengths with the help of the regular feedbacks provided by the teachers, they feel more confident and they make more effort for their further individual progress.

4.3.7. Dislike about Portfolio

Although portfolio keeping process as a whole is aimed to help the language learners keep track of their individual progress, it is not always favored by the language learners due to various reasons. In the interview, the majority of the teachers reported that some students had dislikes about the use of portfolios in the classrooms. Among the reasons for those dislikes are writing the drafts over and over, the length of the process and the overload of work.

Four of the teachers commented about the dislikes of the students while one teacher made no comments as she thought there were no dislikes of students about portfolio keeping process. The related question was: "*What do the students seem to dislike about keeping portfolios*?" Answers to the question varied and subcategories were made.

Teacher 1 and Teacher 5 reported that the students seem to dislike writing over and over in the portfolio keeping process. Teacher 2 and Teacher 3 reported that the students seem to dislike about the long and difficult process. In addition, Teacher 4 reported that the students seem to dislike most about the overload of work within the portfolio keeping process**.**

Student motivation is a major concern in the portfolio keeping process. The question as to what extent the portfolio keeping increases the motivation of the language learners has always been an issue of debate in the language learning process. Regarding this issue, the majority of the teachers reported that the portfolio keeping process increased the student motivation to a certain extent. On the other hand, one teacher articulated that the portfolio keeping process does not increase the student motivation although the students find the process useful. The related question was: "*Do you think portfolio keeping increases the student motivation? If yes, in what way? If no, why*?"

Teacher 1:

I think it doesn't because they do it as they feel they have to do it and this does not increase the motivation.

Teacher 2:

It increases the student motivation; however, some students are de-motivated because of the long process. It increases motivation as once the students feel successful, they feel more motivated and they write more.

Teacher 3:

Yes, it does in many terms. Students know they will be followed and controlled during the process. Therefore, they take it seriously at the beginning of the module and they don't feel shy about making mistakes because they believe that their mistakes will be corrected individually. Their motivation will increase accordingly.

Teacher 4:

Yes, it does because the portfolio keeping process is encouraging as a whole. They feel motivated and encouraged about each next step in academic writing. The more they succeed, the more they feel motivated for the departmental courses ahead.

Teacher 5:

Yes, it does because when the teacher ensures the students that they are doing well and they are successful, they feel more motivated. Also, when the students are efficient in portfolio keeping, this reflects directly to their grades and this increases their motivation accordingly.

As to what the majority of the teachers articulated, the portfolio keeping process, as general, increases the student motivation. They tend to feel more motivated when the teacher encourages them after a process of regular feedback. In addition to this, the student motivation level increases in accordance with the grades they get. The majority of the EFL writing teachers reported that the use of portfolio resulted in better scores

and an observable increase in the student motivation accordingly. The portfolio keeping process also helped the students in academic writing and motivated them for further educational programs in their departments.

4.4. Findings from Student Interviews

Regular interviews were made with 10 students in six different writing classes. The students were chosen randomly from each writing class and 5 questions were asked to the student interviewees. The interviews were made to investigate the attitudes of students towards the use of portfolios in EFL writing classes. The findings elicited from student interviews are presented in 5 sections.

4.4.1. Definition of Portfolio

The student interviewees were asked to define the portfolio to identify their level of awareness about the portfolio keeping process. The related question was: "*How do you define portfolio*?" Some of the students perceive the portfolio as a file in which there are samples of their work while some others reinforce the process focus of the portfolio implicitly by reporting that it is the identification and correction of mistakes and a tool that enables them to keep track of their own progress and contributes to their self-development in writing. Students' conceptions of portfolio were articulated as in the following:

Student 1:

A portfolio is a system of files, which enables us to conduct regular studies.

Student 2:

A portfolio is a file, which includes all the homework that our teachers give throughout a year

Student 3:

A portfolio is a file, which helps us see and correct our mistakes. With this file, we also check our progress.

Student 8:

A portfolio is the reinforcement and improvement of the subjects we have learnt. Writing is one of the best methods in learning and portfolio keeping gives me the chance to get feedback and enhance my improvement in writing. It is a really good activity.

4.4.2. Strengths and Weaknesses

The portfolio keeping process plays an efficient role in the identification of strengths and weaknesses. In this respect, the students were asked to reflect on the portfolio keeping in their learning. The related question was: *"Do you think portfolio keeping helps you learn about your strengths and weaknesses? If yes, in what way? If no, why?"* All the students reported that the portfolio keeping process is beneficial in that it gives them the opportunity identify the areas they are weak and strong at. By this way, they stated, they try to improve the areas they are weak at. Additionally, they pointed out that they gain self-confidence when they are shown by their teachers that they are strong at certain areas:

Student 1:

Yes, it certainly does. The fact that our teachers make corrections on our homework enables us to learn about our strengths and weaknesses. It also enables us to think what we should and shouldn't do in the exams or the areas we are weak and strong at.

Student 5:

Yes, it certainly does because you can have a look at your mistakes in a clearer picture and you can learn from your mistakes and also strengths because you know what you are doing and what you are good at.

Student 6:

I think it does. When we write in a portfolio, we can see our good and bad sides. We can reflect our ideas easily in a portfolio. In the lesson, the teacher gives us a general topic and we write it and this enables us to see the areas we are strong or weak at.

Student 8:

Yes it does. The teacher gives me my paper back and I correct my mistakes and learn about my mistakes and I say to myself that I am doing this wrong or I am doing this right. I should do this or I shouldn't do that.

Student 10:

Yes, it helps me a lot. When I write a paragraph, I ask my teacher about it and he shows me where my mistakes are and then I try not to make the same mistakes again and it improves me. It also helps me see my strengths because I learn more vocabulary and I have a better memory this way.

4.4.3. Motivation

The students were asked about their feelings towards the portfolio keeping process to obtain more data about their overall attitudes. The related question was: "*Do you feel motivated when you are engaged in portfolio keeping process?*" The majority of the students think that they feel motivated in the portfolio keeping process. Some of the students articulated that portfolio keeping motivated them before the exams. On the other hand, some students reported that they felt motivated when they made fewer mistakes and some others felt more responsible and comfortable when they are actively involved in the portfolio keeping process:

Student 1:

I feel that I am in a more disciplined system. Giving the portfolios and portfolio homework on time and my teacher's positive perspectives all motivate me. I also feel close to the teacher when I keep a portfolio.

Student 2:

Yes, of course I feel motivated because I feel happy and successful whenI realize that my mistakes are getting fewer especially in my last drafts. That motivates me a lot.

Student 3:

Yes, I feel motivated when I see my mistakes and see that I can succeed, I also feel that I will be successful in the upcoming exams. Hence, I feel very motivated.

One student reported that she does not feel motivated in the process although she finds the process itself useful.

Student 8: I don't feel motivated. I correct the mistakes and it helps me but I don't feel an extra motivation.

4.4.4. Objectivity

The question whether the portfolio keeping ensures objectivity is one of the focuses of this study. The related interview question was: "*Do you think portfolio keeping ensures objectivity in the classroom? If yes, in what way? If no, why?* From the students' answers to this question, we realized that all the students find the portfolio keeping objective. According to them, among the reasons behind the language learners' beliefs that the portfolio keeping is an objective process are the standard grading system, standard evaluation criteria, the equal and just application of the portfolio as reflected in the following extracts:

Student 1:

Indeed, we keep portfolios individually but the teachers give the same homework to all students in the classroom, she collects and gives them back at the same time and our teachers use the standard criteria while grading. Thus I think it ensures objectivity in the classroom.

Student 3:

The grading is equal for every student. The teacher's approach to the students is also objective. Everything is the same for everyone in the process.

Student 4:

Our teachers give the same topics to us and collect them at the same time. Every one of us can consult to our teacher for anything. Conditions and the system are just and equal.

Student 9:

There is a general objective system and it appeals to everybody. It is equal and just.

4.4.5. Changes in Attitudes

One of the questions raised during the interviews was about the attitude changes of the learners at the beginning and at the end of the process. The related question was: *"Is there a difference in your attitude towards portfolio keeping at the beginning and at the end of the module? If yes, how has it changed?"* The majority of the learners suggested that there has been a difference in their attitudes towards the use of portfolios. Those are the ones who claimed that their attitude displayed a change in a positive way. Most of them reported that they were pessimistic and they didn't believe the necessity of the portfolios at first:

Student 1:

When I first heard about it, I felt scared. I didn't know what to do. I was in a constant worry about what I should do and how I will handle the situation. But then, in time, I realized that I could benefit from the portfolio keeping by the help of my teacher's guidance and feedback.

Student 3:

At first, I thought it was an unnecessary grading and homework system. But then, my attitude changed in time in a positive way. I realized that it

44

contributed to my works a lot and influenced me positively. This also reflected into my exam scores. I got very good marks

Some also reported that they had some worries and anxiety. However, as the process went on, they claimed that they realized the necessity of the portfolios and gained self-confidence. Accordingly, they started to write better and observe their progress better. On the other hand, Student 5, Student 6, Student 7 and Student 8 all claimed that their attitudes have displayed no difference from the beginning to the end of the module. Student 5, Student 6 and Student 7 suggested that they have always been positive about the portfolio keeping and their attitudes have not changed:

Student 5:

My attitude hasn't displayed any change. It has always been positive. From the very beginning, I knew that our mistakes would be corrected and I had already been informed about the process. Hence I always felt positive about it.

However, student 8 claimed that her attitude has always been negative and she still doesn't want to write and be involved in the portfolio keeping process:

Student 8:

My attitude hasn't displayed any difference from the beginning up to now. I don't want to write and keep portfolio. It has always been the same.

4.5. Findings from Student Attitude Survey

The student attitude survey consisted of 10 questions. Eighty-nine students answered the questions in the survey. In this part, the findings related to the overall student attitudes towards the use of portfolios are presented. The aim of the first question was to investigate if the students would prefer to be marked on the portfolio. Items on the attitude survey range from item 1 *strongly disagree (SD)*, item 2 *disagree (DA)*, item 3 *don't know (DK)*, item 4 *agree (A)* to item 5 *strongly agree (SA)* as indicated below in Table 1:

Table 1. Student Responses to Attitude Survey

ITEM	SD F%	DA F%	DK F%	A F%	SA F%
Q1.	48.3	12.4	3.4	32.6	3.4
Q2.	41.6	23.6	6.7	21.3	6.7
Q3.	39.3	11.2	14.6	15.7	19.1
Q4.	40.4	15.7	18.0	16.9	9.0
Q5.	38.2	13.5	13.5	24.7	10.1
Q6.	44.8	20.7	10.3	13.8	10.3
Q7.	37.9	17.2	12.6	18.4	13.8
Q8.	28.7	17.2	21.8	16.1	16.1
Q9.	44.8	14.9	11.5	18.4	10.3
Q10.	46.0	16.1	8.0	25.3	4.6

As represented in Table 1, we received variety of answers for each question. For question one, out of 89 students, 48.3 % of them marked item 1(strongly disagree) and they put forward that they wouldn't prefer to be marked on portfolio. 32.6 % of the students marked item 4 (agree) and reported that they would prefer to be marked on the portfolio whereas 12.4 % of the students marked item 2 (disagree) and displayed no favor for the use of portfolio as an assessment. Interestingly, Table 1 reveals the percentages of item 3 (don't know) and item 5 (strongly agree) at the same rate (3.4%).

The second question aimed to investigate if the students have the chance to show their abilities when they are marked on the portfolio as an assessment. Based on Table 1, it is possible to point out that item 1(strongly disagree) has the biggest percentage (41.6%). It can be concluded from this finding that 41.6 % of the students do not favor the idea that they find the chance to show their ability when they are marked on portfolio. 23.6 % of the students displayed a negative attitude. Interestingly, Table 2 indicates closer percentages for item 2(disagree) and item 4 (agree) as 21.3 % of the students marked item 4 (agree). Table 1 indicates the percentages of item 3 (don't know) and item 5 (strongly agree) at the same rate (6.7 %).

In the light of the data obtained from the percentages for question three, it can be clearly figured out that item 1(strongly disagree) has the biggest percentage (39.3%) which shows that the students are not generally in favor of the idea that they have the

chance to learn about their strengths and weaknesses when they are marked on the portfolio. Interestingly, the percentages for item 2, 3, 4 and 5 are closer (11.2 %, 14.6 %, 15.7%, and 19.1 %).

As depicted in Table 1, for question four, item 1 (strongly disagree) has the biggest percentage (40.4%). It is easy to figure out from this percentage that the majority of the students bear a negative attitude towards the idea that portfolio assessment ensures objectivity in the classroom. Interestingly, Table 1 illustrates similar percentages for item 2 (disagree), item 3 (don't know) and item 4 (agree) (15. 7 %, 18.0% and 16.9 %). Table 4 displays the lowest percentage for the item 5 (strongly agree) (9.0%), which also means that the students in general do not believe the objectivity of the portfolio as an assessment.

Based on Table 1 illustrating the percentages for question five, it can be concluded that item 1(strongly disagree) was marked by the majority of the students (38.2 %). In the light of the data from this percentage, it is easy to say that 38.2 % of the students do not think that portfolio assessment helps them learn about their mistakes. Surprisingly, item 4 (agree) bears the second highest percentage (24.7 %). That means 24.7% of the students agree the idea that portfolio assessment helps them learn about their mistakes. Interestingly, Table 1 shows the percentages of item 2 and item 3 at the same rate (13.5 %). Table 1 indicates the lowest percentage for item 5 (strongly agree) (10.1 %).

For question six, 44.8% of the students marked item 1(strongly disagree), which means that the majority of the language learners totally disagreed with the idea that they feel motivated when they are marked on the portfolio. Item 2 (disagree) has the second highest percentage as it can obviously be seen from the table above (20.7 %). 13.8 % of the students marked on item 4 (agree) and expressed that they felt motivated in the portfolio process. Interestingly, students marked on item 3 (don't know) and item 5 (strongly agree) at the same rate (10.3%).

For question seven, item 1 (strongly disagree) has the highest percentage (37.9%). It can be concluded from this finding that the majority of the students think that portfolio keeping process is time consuming. The students marked item 2 (disagree) (17.2%) and item 4 (agree) at a similar rate (18.4%). Similarly, the percentages for item 3 (don't know) and item 5 (strongly agree) are close (12.6 %, 13.8%).

As indicated above in Table 1, for question eight, % 28.7 of the students put forward that their attitudes towards the use of portfolio have not displayed any change from the

beginning to the end of the module whereas 21.8 % of the students have no idea concerning their attitude changes. 17.2 % of the students disagree with the idea. The percentages for item 4 and item 5 are the same (16.1 %).

For question nine, the majority of the students (44.8%) marked item 1 and strongly disagreed with the idea that portfolio should be used as an assessment in the classroom. On the other hand, 18.4% of the students agreed on the use of portfolios in the classroom. 14.9 % of the students disagreed with the idea whereas 11.5 % of the students had no idea whether portfolio should be used as an assessment. The item 5 was marked the least by the students (10.3 %) which means that the number of the students who strongly agree with the use of the portfolio assessment makes up the lowest percentage as shown in the table above.

For question ten, the majority of the students (46%) marked on item 1 and did not favor the idea that they make more effort when they are marked on the portfolio. 25.3% of the students agreed that they make more effort whereas 16.1 % of the students disagreed with the idea. 8.0 % of the students were neutral about the idea. The findings also reveal that the percentage for the students who strongly agrees that they make more effort when they are marked on the portfolio is the lowest (4.6 %).

CHAPTER V

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. Introduction

   This chapter reveals the discussion of the findings regarding research questions, implications for ELT, limitations and suggestions for future studies.

5.2. Evaluation of the Findings from Teacher Reflection Papers and the Teacher Interview

   In the light of the data received from the teacher reflection papers, it can be concluded that all the writing teachers teaching in six EFL writing classes believe that students have a positive attitude towards the use of portfolio assessment. From the comments they made on the reflection papers, it is easy to observe that their personal comments as teachers of writing skill are positive, too. Similarly, in the teacher interviews, their comments were positive and they all reported in the interviews that the students benefit from the use of portfolio throughout the portfolio keeping process.

   We may also conclude that portfolio keeping process helps the students learn about their mistakes. Students' learning out of their mistakes by regular feedback is also reinforced by the teacher interviews and reflection papers. They also reinforced that portfolio keeping process helps the students monitor and keep track of their own progress. Moreover, it became clear that the students feel motivated towards learning when they see their own progress. This conclusion is based on the data gathered from the reflection papers and the interviews. The teachers put forward that the students feel motivated, as the whole process is encouraging.

   Although the teachers find the process as a whole useful for the students and have a positive attitude regarding this, in both the reflection papers and the interviews, they reported the same problems. They articulated that writing the papers over and over is an extra burden for the students in the modular system, which is also difficult to adapt. They think that the students feel lost and overwhelmed in the process. Among the other problems that the teachers identifies throughout the process are boring and long lasting nature of the process, overload of work, the students' tendency to lose their drafts and their unwillingness to write each time. Additionally, when asked about the problems related to the process both in the interview and reflection papers, the teachers claimed

that there were some students who seemed really demotivated and lost in the process. They suggested that these students were especially the ones who weren't able to keep the track of their own progress. They also reported about the presence of students who were indifferent to the classes and seemed to make no effort. These conclusions are similar to those of Davis & Pannamperuma (2009) and Brook (2009).

5.3. Evaluation of the Findings from the Student Interview and the Student Attitude Survey

This study was carried out to investigate the student attitudes towards the use of portfolio as an assessment. The research question driving the study was: What are the attitudes of learners towards the use of performance based portfolio in EFL writing classes? Data received from the student interviews and the student attitude survey regarding this research question.

In the light of the data obtained from the student interviews, it might be concluded that the students have a positive attitude towards the use of portfolio as an assessment as in the findings of Yang (2003). All the students reported that the portfolio keeping helped them learn about their weaknesses and strengths. Additionally, the majority of the students articulated that they felt motivated in the process. They claimed that once they realized they could succeed, they felt more motivated and tried to write better with fewer mistakes each time. They added that they felt more responsible when they were actively involved in the process. It can also be revealed from the data that all of the students find the process objective. They suggested that there is a standard, equal and just system for each student and the teachers do grading objectively through standard evaluation criteria. The findings also display that the majority of the learners had some changes in their attitudes related to the portfolio keeping process either in a positive or negative way as it can be concluded from the findings of Caner (2010). Interestingly, the data from the student attitude survey revealed the opposite of the data from the student interviews. Drawing on the findings, we realized that the students had a negative attitude towards the use of portfolio as an assessment. The survey was carried out with 89 student participants and ten questions were asked in the survey. For each question, the item that the most frequently marked by the students was item 1(strongly disagree). This obviously shows us about the negative feelings and attitudes they had towards this

assessment type. That means that the majority of the students strongly disagreed that portfolios should be used as an assessment.

5.4. Discussion of the Findings

In the light of all the data gathered for this study, it is easy to conclude that the student attitude survey contradicts with the other findings such as teacher reflection papers, student and teacher interviews. Although the writing teachers had a positive observation about the student attitudes, the student survey revealed the opposite. Instead, it revealed a disfavor by the majority of the students. The reason for the attitudes of the students in the interviews to be positive might be the limited participants that involved in the interviews since the study revealed the opposite findings when more participants were included. Interestingly, the majority of the writing teachers claimed about a positive overall student attitude in both the reflection papers and the teacher interviews. On the other hand, they reported some problems related to the portfolio keeping process. However, they put forward that these problems were related to only some students and some situations. The problems the teachers reported in the reflection papers and the findings from the attitude survey showed similarity only in the way that the students found the process time consuming. More interestingly, the students as well as the teachers reported in the interviews that they found the process objective. However, the results from the survey showed that the students in general do not believe in the objectivity of the portfolio assessment. Similarly, although both the teacher and student interviewees claimed that the portfolio assessment helped the students learn about their mistakes and strengths and that the students felt motivated throughout the process, the survey displayed the opposite. Furthermore, although the students reported some changes in their attitudes related to the portfolio keeping, the results from the survey revealed that the majority of the students did not have any attitude changes. Lastly, the student attitude survey results contracted with the student interviews in that the student interviewees reported they made more effort when they learnt about their mistakes and received regular feedback from their teachers.

5.5. Limitations of the Study

The present study has a limited number of target population because it only included a certain number of students and teachers in Toros University Preparatory School.

These limitations need to be taken into consideration throughout the conduction of the study. One of the limitations of the study is the difficulty to generalize existing data and the findings. Another constraint is that the concept of performance based portfolio is new to the students most of whom come from an education system in which there is almost no use of performance tasks and assessments. When considering this study, the learners' backgrounds might be among the factors that need to be taken into consideration. One reason for that is the test and product oriented nature of the education system they have been involved in for years. This might impose a limitation on the actively use of performance based portfolio assessment in classrooms which requires actual performance of students' works and a dynamic learning process.

5.6. Implications for English Language Teaching

The findings of the present study mainly aimed to investigate the attitudes of the students and the writing teachers towards the use of portfolio as an assessment. Within this respect, this study might contribute to further studies and research and it may raise awareness of EFL teachers regarding the significance of the portfolio as an alternative assessment tool. Although further research is necessary to enhance the findings of this study, the present findings have several important implications for the field of foreign language teaching. Additionally, the data gathered for this study may be used for in-service or teacher training programs within the context of ELT.

5.7. Suggestions for Further Study

As the study involved limited participants, further research regarding the portfolio assessment need to be carried out and the findings need to be analyzed thoroughly. Secondly, this study may investigate the level differences in the modular system including elementary, pre intermediate and intermediate levels regarding the student attitudes. Lastly, other variables such as gender, age or the previous experience may also be taken into account in the study.

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7. APPENDICES

7.1. Appendix 1: Student Attitude Scale Towards Performance Based Portfolio Assessment in Writing Classes

1. I would prefer to be marked on portfolio.

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

2. When portfolio is used as an assessment in class, I find the chance to show my ability.

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

3. I learn better about my strengths and weaknesses when I am marked on portfolio.

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

4. I thinkgetting marked on portfolioensure fairness in class.

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

5. I think portfolio helps me more to learn about my mistakes.

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

6. I feel motivated when I am marked on portfolio

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

7. I think portfolio keeping is time consuming.

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

8. I thinkmy attitude towards portfolio assessment has changed from the beginning to the end of the module

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

9. I think portfolio should be used as a means of assessment in class.

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

10. I feel I put more effort when I am marked on portfolioin class.

Strongly agree	Agree	Don't know	Disagree	Strongly disagree

7.2. Appendix 2: Interview Questions for the Students - Attitudes of Students Towards Performance Based Portfolıo

Interview for students:

1. How do you define "portfolio"?

2. Do you think portfolio keeping helps you learn about your strenghts and weaknesses? If yes, in what way? If no, why?

3. Do you feel motivated when you are engaged in portfolio keeping process?

4. Do you think portfolio keeping ensures objectivity in the classroom? If yes, in what way? If no, why?

5. Is there a difference in your attitude towards portfolio keeping at the begining and at the end of the module? If yes, how has it changed?

7.3. Appendix 3: Interview Questions for the Teachers -- Teacher Attitudes Towards the Use Performance Based Portfolio in the Classroom

In your previous studies, how much experience did you have with performance based portfolio as an assessment?

1. How do you define a portfolio?

2. Having observed the students for a span of 8 weeks, do you think the student attitudes towards performance based portfolio are positive or negative?

3. Do you think portfolio assessment ensures objectivity in class? If yes, why? If no, why not?

4. What problems have you identified throughout the process writing and portfolio keeping process?

5. Do you think portfolio keeping process help students learn about their strenghts and mistakes?

6. What do students seem to dislike about keeping portfolios?

7. Do you think portfolio keeping increases the student motivation? If yes, in what way? If no, why?

7.4. Appendix 4: Reflection Paper

TOROS UNIVERSITY 2013-2014 ACADEMIC YEAR
MODULE 3 (8 WEEKS)

WEEK I:

Name of the Observer: …………………………………………

Date : …………………………………………

Name of the class : …………………………………………

Performance Writing Task: …………………………………………………

Problems identified: …………………………………………………

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Students' overall feelings /attitudes about process writing approach and portfolio keeping:

Positive ☐

Negative ☐

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Your personal comment & attitude: ………………………………………………..

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Do you think the process writing approach and portfolio keeping help students learn?

Yes ☐

No ☐