

**UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY CLASS EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES  
TOWARDS ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIOS  
AS A METHOD OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT**

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **UNIVERSITY PREPARATORY CLASS EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIOS AS A METHOD OF ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT**

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This study aims to investigate university preparatory class students' attitudes towards the assessment system by which they are evaluated and alternative assessment before and after the implementation of the electronic portfolio, their attitudes towards the electronic portfolio before and after keeping it for two months, their suggestions about improving the electronic portfolio and how keeping the electronic portfolio affects their computer literacy. For this purpose, 19 intermediate level EFL students in the Department of Basic English, METU were chosen as subjects.

For this study, data were collected by administering two questionnaires before and after the implementation, conducting informal interviews with the students and keeping a diary in order to record teacher reflection. Then, the data collected through these data collection tools have been analysed. Finally, the results are discussed in order to interpret students' attitudes towards the current assessment system at DBE, alternative assessment tools and the electronic portfolio.

The findings of this study indicated that although the students are not completely dissatisfied with the current assessment used at DBE, their attitude towards alternative assessment tools, portfolio, and electronic portfolio was also positive before the implementation and keeping the electronic portfolio for two months made their attitudes towards these assessment tools even more positive. In

addition, some of the students indicated that using both traditional and alternative assessment tools may reflect better assessment of their performance.

Keywords: Traditional assessment, alternative assessment, portfolio, electronic portfolio, self-reflection

## ÖZ

### ÜNİVERSİTELERİN HAZIRLIK SINIFLARINDAKİ ÖĞRENCİLERİN ALTERNATİF BİR DEĞERLENDİRME YÖNTEMİ OLARAK ELEKTRONİK PORTFÖYLERE BAKIŞ AÇILARI

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Bu araştırma, üniversitelerdeki hazırlık sınıflarındaki öğrencilerin kullanılmakta olan öğrenci performansını değerlendirme araçlarına ve alternatif değerlendirme yöntemlerine yönelik uygulamadan önce ve sonraki bakış açılarını, iki aylık uygulamadan sonra elektronik portföye bakış açılarını, elektronik portföyü geliştirmek konusundaki önerilerini ve elektronik portföy tutmanın bilgisayar kullanım becerilerini nasıl etkilediğini öğrenmeyi hedeflemiştir. Bu amaçla, Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Temel İngilizce Bölümü'nde öğrenim gören 19 orta düzey yabancı dil öğrencisi denek olarak seçilmiştir.

Çalışma için gerekli veriler, uygulamadan önce ve sonra verilen iki anket, öğrencilerle sohbet ortamında yapılan görüşmeler ve öğretmenin görüşlerini kaydetmek amacıyla tutulan bir günlük aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Daha sonra, bu veri toplama teknikleriyle elde edilen veriler analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlar öğrencilerin Temel İngilizce Bölümü'ndeki mevcut öğrenci performansını değerlendirme araçlarına, alternatif değerlendirme yöntemlerine ve elektronik portföye bakış açılarını yorumlamak amacıyla tartışılmıştır.

Çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, öğrencilerin Temel İngilizce Bölümü'ndeki mevcut öğrenci performansını değerlendirme araçlarından tamamen hoşnutsuz olmamalarına rağmen, alternatif değerlendirme yöntemlerine, portföy ve elektronik portföye bakış açılarının da uygulamadan önce olumlu olduğuna ve iki ay elektronik portföy tutmanın bu değerlendirme yöntemlerine bakış açılarını daha da olumlu

yaptığına işaret etmektedir. Ayrıca bazı öğrenciler performanslarının daha iyi değerlendirilmesi için geleneksel ve alternatif değerlendirme yöntemlerinin bir arada kullanılmasını önermektedirler.

Anahtar kelimeler: Geleneksel değerlendirme, alternatif değerlendirme, portföy, elektronik portföy ve kişisel eleştirel bakış.

To my wife and little angel

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.0 Presentation**

This chapter introduces the background to the study, the statement of the problem, the research questions, the significance of the study, the limitations of the study and the key terms used in the study.

#### **1.1 Background to the Study**

Assessment has always been one of the hot issues in English language teaching and the main method of assessment has been traditional assessment for years. Its having been used for a very long time stems from the fact that using traditional assessment tools brings many advantages to the stakeholders in language teaching and learning. For instance, although it may be difficult to prepare traditional assessment tools, grading them is quite easy for teachers. As for students, having these assessment tools is advantageous because if they are good at memorizing they can answer many of the questions in the exams based on traditional assessment. Most of the traditional assessment tools require students only to select an answer or recall information to obtain high grades. They do not have to use higher order thinking skills very often to be successful in most of the exams based on traditional assessment. It is possible that parents also like traditional assessment tools because it is easy to monitor your child's educational development by looking at the grades she or he gets from these exams. The directors of the schools may also like them because reliability level of traditional assessment tools is high, which prevents students or parents from complaining about the results of the exams.

After they have been used for a long time as the main way of assessing students; however, traditional assessment tools have revealed some shortcomings. One of the shortcomings of traditional assessment tools came out to be the fact that "most exams require lower-level thinking skills, usually ignoring most higher-level

and perhaps controversial but certainly more useful skills such as synthesis; ” however, “learning represents much more than merely retaining given knowledge and demonstrating a set of discrete skills” (Cole, Ryan, Kick & Mathies, 2000, p.6). Thus, it can be said that traditional methods of assessment may not be enough to assess multiple dimensions of language learning. Another important shortcoming of traditional assessment tools is that they “only provide a numerical description of students” (Shaaban, 2001, p.17). They do not give much information about the learning process and the progress of the students. The results of traditional assessment tools represent only a limited view of what students know and what they can do with that knowledge. Creating test-driven classroom instruction is also one of the liabilities inherent with traditional assessment tools. The last but not the least important shortcoming of traditional assessment tools is that they generally prevent the learners from thinking about their own learning and judging their own work.

When these shortcomings of traditional methods of assessment came out, some alternatives to traditional methods of assessment emerged. These alternatives to assessment adopted a holistic approach to assessment and a more balanced and broader assessment because alternative assessment “includes authentic and performance-based measures. These methods of assessment allow students to demonstrate desired performance through real-life situations” (Meyer, 1992, p.39).

As one of the most popular techniques of alternative assessment, portfolios have been used in foreign language education for about two decades. Portfolios have been defined in different ways. However, one of the most accurate definitions of portfolios was offered by Northwest Evaluation Association:

A purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student’s efforts, progress, and achievements. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit, and evidence of student self-reflection (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991, p.58).

Similar to its definition, the purpose of using portfolios has also varied. While it was used mainly for assessing students’ writing in the past, nowadays it is being used for assessing other skills, too.

Portfolios became one of the most common methods of alternative assessment because of the advantages they offer to students and teachers. Portfolios

not only offer an authentic demonstration of accomplishments in several skills and areas, but also allow students to take responsibility for the work they have done by taking students into consideration while making decisions about the content of the portfolio and also by requiring them to write comments on their own works through self reflection. Self reflection also enables the learners to find out their strengths and weaknesses so that they “develop a clearer idea of the areas in which they need to work” (Cole, Ryan, Kick & Mathies, 2000, p.6). In other words, “portfolios enable students to become more aware of themselves as learners and to take ownership in the processes and outcomes of their learning” (Harvey, 2000, p. 46). Portfolios also illuminate some capabilities not covered very much by traditional assessment tools such as critical, creative and independent thinking, self-reflection, metacognition and self-assessment. In addition to these advantages of using portfolios as an alternative assessment method, it may improve instruction in the classroom because assessment takes place during instruction. Making learning individualized, encouraging student-centered teaching and fostering high order learning are other advantages of using portfolios as an assessment tool. These advantages of portfolios help teachers to assess students’ overall performance.

However, in addition to the benefits portfolios bring to the teachers and students of EFL and ESL, portfolios also create some difficulties for them. The first difficulty of keeping portfolios is storing them. Holding all of the students’ works in files is not easy. As Lankes (1995) points out “how to store and manage portfolio materials is a concern shared by many instructors interested in implementing portfolio programs” (p. 43). Keeping students’ works in electronic format may solve this problem largely. Thus, students will need only diskettes or CDs in order to store their works. Secondly, although some instructors ask their students to put video or audio tapes in their portfolios, traditional paper portfolios generally do not include any evidence of students’ oral proficiency. In other words, keeping traditional paper portfolios limits the content of portfolios. However,

since current technology allows for the capture and storage of information in the form of text, graphics, sound, and video, students can save writing samples, solutions to mathematical problems, samples of art work, science projects and multimedia presentations in one coherent document (Lankes, 1995, p. 45).

These advantages of electronic portfolios enable the students to put the recordings of their presentations or similar oral performances in their portfolios as evidence of their speaking proficiency. Another difficulty inherent in keeping paper portfolios is about sharing the. Only the people around students can see their paper portfolios. However, “a computer-based portfolio program allows for easy transfer of information” (Lankes, 1995, p.44). When necessary, students or their instructors may send electronic portfolios to other instructors, institutions or companies through CDs or e-mail. If students’ works are displayed on the Internet, transferring is even easier. Lastly, keeping paper portfolios may be demotivating for the students because keeping a portfolio by doing a lot of written work and writing reflection for them is quite difficult. Using technology while keeping portfolio may help both students and teachers to overcome this difficulty. However, although we are living in the ‘technology age’, most of the teachers ignore students’ interest in technology and thus they miss the opportunity to motivate their students. Letting students use technology as a part of language learning process may motivate students highly and make keeping portfolio a more enjoyable and meaningful process for students.

The present study aims at using technology as a way of empowering portfolios and getting feedback from students about their attitudes towards keeping electronic portfolios. The study focuses on the students’ attitudes towards the traditional assessment tools used at the Department of Basic English, METU and their attitudes towards the alternative assessment in general and electronic portfolios specifically before and after the implementation. The study also aims at exploring students’ suggestions to improve electronic portfolios and the effect of keeping electronic portfolio on students’ computer literacy.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problem**

Although they have been used widely in some countries, portfolios have not had this same acceptance in others such as Turkey. Recently, Turkish Ministry of Education has decided that portfolios should be used as an element of assessment. Different from primary and secondary schools, however, preparatory schools of Turkish universities have been using them for a long time. At some universities, they are used for grading students’ writing skills or giving students performance grades in the same way projects and presentations are used. Although they have been used for

a long time at preparatory classes, instructors may have some difficulties using portfolios effectively. One main reason for this may be the fact that most of the instructors are not trained about using portfolios. Another important reason for not being able to use portfolios effectively may be the fact that many instructors are not aware of the ways of empowering portfolios. Using technology as a way of empowering portfolios may make the process of keeping portfolios more motivating, accurate and enriched for both instructors and students.

Some instructors have done research about these difficulties related to using portfolios, the effects of using alternative assessment, especially portfolios on students' overall performance and the instructors' attitudes towards them. However, the empirical research focusing on students' attitudes towards assessment techniques is very limited although student-centered teaching is thought to be a necessity in today's foreign language classes. Therefore, this study might be beneficial by filling in this gap in the literature at a global level.

In Turkey, there are also few theses and dissertations about the implementation of portfolios at the university level or the instructors' attitudes towards alternative assessment and portfolios. Some good examples are: *State University Preparatory Class EFL Instructors' Attitudes Towards Assessment Methods Used at Their Institutions and Portfolios as a Method of Alternative Assessment* (Oğuz, 2003), *Teachers' Understandings of Projects and Portfolios at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division* (Subasi, 2002), *A Suggested Portfolio Development Model for ELT Students at Gazi University* (2001) and *Portfolio Assessment in Writing Classes: Implementation and Assessment* (Şahinkarakaş, 1998). Although they have been used at a limited number of educational institutions and researched by a limited number of instructors up to now, portfolios have started to gain popularity recently through some changes in Turkish educational system in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Instructors at the preparatory classes of the universities are also more open to the use of portfolios in different ways. Another factor that makes portfolios an important issue to research is the fact that Turkey is at the gates of the European Union, which puts an emphasis on the use of portfolios in foreign language education. The Union encourages the foreign language instructors to use The European Language Portfolio

(ELP) “to support the development of plurilingualism and pluriculturalism” (“European Language Portfolio”, 2005)

It is possible that portfolios will play a more important role at all levels of education, from primary schools to universities in Turkish educational system in the following years. Thus it is necessary to get feedback from all of the stakeholders related to the foreign language education while making decisions about assessment system and using portfolios for assessment. In addition to feedback from instructors, administrators and parents, student feedback about the use of all kinds of portfolios, including electronic portfolios, should also be taken into consideration while decisions are being made about assessment system and the use of portfolios. It is necessary to know whether students are happy with the current assessment system or not. Also teachers need to learn their students’ ideas about alternative assessment techniques. Inserting technology in portfolios through asking students to keep electronic portfolios is one of the innovative ways of assessing students and the student feedback about the possible advantages and disadvantages of electronic portfolios is necessary before deciding whether they can be helpful to language learning or not. Therefore, focusing on students’ points of view, this study aims at finding out the students’ ideas about the current way of assessment and their attitudes towards alternative assessment and electronic portfolios.

### **1.3 Research Questions**

This study will explore the following research questions:

1. What are the students’ attitudes towards the assessment system by which they are evaluated and alternative assessment before and after the implementation of electronic portfolio?
2. What are the students’ attitudes towards the electronic portfolio before and after keeping it throughout a semester?
3. What are the students’ suggestions about improving the electronic portfolio?
4. How does keeping electronic portfolio affect students’ computer literacy?

### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

Although they also have some limitations and shortcomings, electronic portfolios offer some benefits. However, educators need feedback from students

about the effects of keeping electronic portfolios on them before making decisions about their efficiency in language learning process and assessment. Not only the instructors but also the students put in a great deal of effort in the process of keeping electronic portfolio. Student feedback about the use of electronic portfolios may guide instructors to use this demanding alternative assessment method more effectively in their classes.

Exploring the students' attitudes towards the electronic portfolio, this study might be useful for EFL instructors, program administrators and curriculum developers who are willing to combine the use of portfolio and technology in their institutions. The results of the study may help them to find out the strengths and weaknesses of the current assessment system from the students' perspective, their attitudes towards keeping electronic portfolios and their suggestions for improving electronic portfolios. Thus, instructors may make necessary modifications to use electronic portfolios more effectively.

### **1.5 Limitations of the Study**

The most important limitation of this study was the number of the subjects who took part in the study. There were only nineteen students who kept the electronic portfolio and provided the researcher with the data about their attitudes towards traditional assessment tools and the process of keeping the electronic portfolio. That is why the findings of the study cannot be generalised for all of the EFL learners in Turkey and the other countries.

The study did not take a long time, which was another limitation. It took only about two months and this situation may have affected students' performance in a negative way because keeping an electronic portfolio was a new experience for the students and two months may not have been enough to get familiar with the process and to benefit from the experience of keeping the electronic portfolio fully. A longer study could have provided the researcher with more reliable data.

Moreover, the researcher did not force the students to prepare everything electronically and he did most of the technical work because of the fact that some of the students did not have access to a computer. Similarly, the researcher did not force the students to design web-pages to display their electronic portfolios because of the time constraints. It would take a long time to have sessions about designing web-

pages and may be it would demotivate many of the students because they thought one of their main purposes in learning English is to pass the proficiency exam rather than learning how to design web-pages. Moreover, although many researchers favoured web based electronic portfolios, the researcher of this study agreed with Galloway (Ali, 2005) about the possible disadvantages of compelling students to display electronic portfolios on the Internet:

Web based electronic portfolios are favoured by many authors and especially by Barrett (1999), however Galloway (2001) is not in favour of restricting electronic portfolios to online webpages. He feels that well formatted and linked (where needed) Microsoft Office (Word, Excel, PowerPoint) documents would be just as effective as web pages while also maintaining the originality of the portfolio. An electronic portfolio may be produced with a combination of any of these tools and so imposing a standard 'template' for electronic portfolios may inhibit learners' creativity and prove counter-productive. (§ 8)

Lastly, the electronic portfolio kept by the students was used to give a performance grade, which meant only 5 points out of 50 points at that semester. The idea of doing so many things only for 5 points may have caused some of the students to lose their motivation for keeping better electronic portfolios and having more positive attitudes towards electronic portfolio.

## **1.6 Key Terms**

The five key concepts in this thesis are *traditional assessment*, *alternative assessment*, *portfolio*, *electronic portfolio*, and *self-reflection*.

*Traditional assessment*: Assessing student performance with tests consisting of selected response test items (e.g., multiple choice, true-false, matching), or constructed response test items (e.g., fill-in, short answer) which require students to select from a set of options, or produce limited performance.

*Alternative assessment*: Any method of finding out what a student knows or can do that is intended to show growth and inform instruction and is not a standardized or traditional test (O'Malley, 1992, p.17).

An assessment that requires students to generate a response to a question rather than choose from a set of responses provided to them. ("Glossary of", 2004)

Nontraditional means of recording evidence of learning, such as coding live art criticism discussions , portfolio reviews, rating performances or art products on criteria established by teachers and students, journals, authentic task assessment. (“Glossary of”, 2005)

*Portfolio:* A purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the student’s efforts, progress and achievements (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991, p. 62 ).

A sampling of breadth and depth of a person’s work conveying the range of abilities, attitudes, experiences, and achievements. (“Electronic Portfolios”, 2002)

*Electronic portfolio:* Multidimensional collection of artifacts or samples of learning that have been collected, displayed electronically, and reflected upon over time (Hay, 2000, p. 45).

A creative means of organizing, summarizing, and sharing artifacts, information, and ideas about teaching and/or learning, along with personal and professional growth. (“Electronic Portfolios”, 2002)

*Self-reflection:* An introspective act in which students examine both production and processes of their learning, and express their emotions and thoughts about what they are learning (Johnson & Rose, 1997, p.73).

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Presentation

This chapter reviews the literature on assessment, traditional and alternative assessment, paper portfolio and electronic portfolio as an alternative method of assessment.

#### 2.1 The Importance of Assessment in Education

Assessment is one of the most important components of education. It is necessary for everybody in an educational setting because of different reasons. Shaaban (2001) confirms this fact and explains how assessment helps teachers and administrators:

In all academic settings, assessment is viewed closely related to instruction. Assessment is needed to help teachers and administrators make decisions about students' linguistic abilities, their placement in appropriate levels, and their achievement (p.29).

In addition to teachers and administrators, assessment helps the students by informing them about their learning. Assessment enables students to identify their strengths and weaknesses so that they become motivated and have the opportunity to overcome their weaknesses and be more successful. The success of assessment depends on several factors related to the specific educational setting such as students' needs, interests, learning styles and also the curriculum. All of these factors need to be taken into consideration while choosing the assessment tool or tools in a specific educational setting. Otherwise, assessment may not be effective.

#### 2.2 Traditional Assessment

Before communicative teaching method became very popular in the ELT world, traditional assessment techniques, paper-and-pencil tests (e.g., true-false,

matching, multiple choice, and cloze) were widely used in educational contexts. They were labelled as effective assessment techniques at that time because in general there was a parallelism between what was done in the classroom and what was assessed in the exams. The rote-learning was considered to be an important outcome of education and it was measured easily through traditional assessment techniques. In time, however, communicative teaching methodology was accepted as a better way of teaching foreign languages and some important shortcomings of traditional assessment techniques emerged.

One of the most important shortcomings of traditional assessment techniques is exam-anxiety. Because getting good grades from exams is regarded as a very important outcome of education, exams create high anxiety on students. Another factor creating anxiety on students is the fact that exams and instruction are considered to be separate from each other because they are made at different times. Anxiety may create a lot of problems for the students because it “affects their language learning as well as their self-image” (Smith, 1996, p.94). In order to reduce anxiety, assessment should be an integral part of the learning and teaching process rather than an independent process whose purpose is to pass judgment on students’ abilities in relation to their classmates (Shaaban, 2001).

The second important shortcoming of traditional assessment is related to validity. Traditional assessment methods cannot be used to evaluate all aspects of language learning taught in a foreign language classroom. For instance, oral skills are difficult to be evaluated by using traditional assessment tools.

Thirdly, communicative method caused the teachers to focus on performance in their classes and there should be a parallelism between the activities done in the classroom and the assessment tool used to evaluate the effect of these activities on students. However, many of the traditional assessment tools do not evaluate students’ performance fully.

As new EFL/ESL curricula have moved in the direction of developing communicative skills through the integration of language and content as well as language skill integration, the traditional paper-and-pencil tests no longer cover the variety of activities and tasks that take place in the classroom. The summative form of testing that permeated the traditional curricula would not be fair to students whose studies are based on communicative activities.

Lastly, traditional assessment tools focus on only the outcome of teaching and learning process. However, to observe the progress of students in time is as important as the outcome in order to find out whether the students have learned the skills the teacher has tried to teach or not.

### **2.3 Alternative Assessment**

The widespread use of communicative methodology in foreign language teaching required the use of some alternatives to assess students' communicative competence in addition to traditional assessment methods which generally focus on mastery of discrete language points and linguistic accuracy and assess whether students can recall some information or not. With the advent of learner-centered and communicative teaching methodologies, a major shift from strictly summative testing tools and procedures to a more humanistic approach using informal assessment techniques that emphasize formative evaluation has taken place in the field of evaluation (O'Neil, 1992). The definition of alternative assessment varies. In Pierce and O'Malley's (1992) words, alternative assessment is "any method of finding out what a student knows or can do that is intended to show growth and inform instruction and is not a standardized or traditional test" (p. 24). Hannock (1994) describes alternative assessment as the ongoing process involving the student and teacher in making judgments about the student's progress in language using non-conventional strategies. Some examples of commonly used alternative assessment tools are portfolios, observations, peer assessment, interviews, simulations, self-assessment, oral presentations, debates, exhibitions and videotapes of performances.

Alternative assessment has some advantages over traditional assessment. First of all, different from traditional assessment tools which may cause students to lose their motivation because they require the failure of some students and focus on the product of learning, alternative assessment techniques may increase student motivation because they focus on the progress students make in their linguistic development and learning process. In other words, "alternative assessment techniques present a dynamic rather than a static picture of their linguistic development" (Shaaban, 2001, p.19). Secondly, because they are performance-based, they require students to perform authentic tasks using oral and/or written communication skills. This characteristic of alternative assessment enables teachers

to assess most of the skills related to the students' proficiency in a foreign language. Thirdly, alternative assessment tools give more freedom of choice about students' learning in different ways. Alternative assessment tools enable the students to affect the learning and teaching process. In this way, the students' dominant learning styles may shape the learning and teaching process to some extent, which may affect students' performance positively. For instance, students may contribute to the decision-making process while the content of portfolio is determined. Another advantage of alternative assessment is that it increases students' responsibility about their own learning. In addition to contributing to the decision-making process, students also reflect upon what they learn, how they learn, what helps them learn, what their strengths and weaknesses are, etc. In this way, learning becomes more learner-centered.

#### **2.4 Portfolios as a tool of Alternative Assessment**

One of the most popular alternative assessment techniques used by foreign language teachers is portfolio. It has always been in the forefront of alternative assessment techniques. Different from the portfolio used in the field of art, in ELT portfolio refers to "the use of records of a student's work over time and in a variety of modes to show the depth, breadth, and the development of the student's abilities" (Pierce and O'Malley, 1992, p.46). The purpose of keeping a portfolio is not to hold everything students do in the classroom in a file but "to demonstrate the extent of a student's communicative competence in the target language through samples of oral and written work" (Wolf, 1989, p. 37). As one of the most popular alternative assessment techniques used in ELT, portfolios offer all the advantages alternative assessment techniques do. They give students the opportunity to choose some components of portfolios and to reflect on what happens in their minds through self-reflection. Writing self-reflection is a very important feature of portfolio. Students can identify their strengths and weaknesses in learning the target language through self-reflection. Self-reflection also improves the dialogue between the teacher and students. If students make self-reflection as a component of portfolio, portfolios tell the teachers "a story for every student- and what is the ultimate goal of evaluation but to give us the knowledge to be able to reflect upon, discuss, and assist a student's journey through the learning process" (Huerta-Macias, 1995, p.14). Another positive

effect of portfolios on students is related to students' self-image. Taking students' ideas into consideration while deciding on the content of the portfolio may enhance their self-image. (Shaaban, 2001, p.20).

Concerning the content of the portfolio, it can be said that, teacher and student negotiation while selecting the content of the portfolio brings some advantages. The most important advantage of allowing students to choose some components of the portfolio is motivation. When students choose a topic or activity based on their interests, they are motivated, which in turn may increase achievement. However, there are some basic rules related to the components of portfolios about which teachers need to be very careful. First of all, portfolios should be multi-sourced if they are used to assess different dimensions of language learning. A good portfolio should include "a variety of the written and oral work that illustrates students' efforts, progress, achievements, and even concerns" (Shaaban, 2001, p.22). Thus a portfolio should include audiotaped or videotaped recordings and writing samples as well as tests. Secondly, student reflection should be included in the portfolio. Without reflection, portfolios are only files used to keep students' works.

It is obvious that portfolios bring some advantages to the learners and teachers of EFL. However, they also have some shortcomings. The first shortcoming of keeping portfolios is that it is time-consuming. Planning, implementation and evaluation of portfolios take a lot of time both for the teachers and students. The second shortcoming of keeping portfolios is related to reliability. Reliability of portfolios may be low because of rater inconsistencies and subjectivity in the scoring process (Blanche, 1988).

In order to minimise these weaknesses and increase its strengths, there are some points the instructors should take into consideration while using the portfolio in their classes. First of all, the students should actively participate in the selection of the portfolio components because of the aforementioned advantages of giving this opportunity to the students. Secondly, the students should reflect on this selection process (and the other stages of the process of keeping the electronic portfolio). This enables the students to become the owners of their language learning efforts. Thirdly, the process of creating and selecting the portfolio components should be included in the evaluation. Another important feature of good portfolios is containing elements of peer and self-assessment. In portfolio-based assessment, not only the teacher but

also the students and their peers should have an active role in assessment. This may be achieved by letting the students participate in deciding the criteria for evaluating the portfolios. Who evaluates the portfolios is also very important. In order to use the portfolios more effectively, they should be evaluated by persons familiar with the individual students and their learning context because the students' performance can only be understood and assessed within their particular contexts. If the portfolios are evaluated by the persons who are not familiar with the context or do not know anything about the learning process of individual students, their evaluation may not be valid. Lastly, different from traditional assessment tools, "the evaluation of portfolios should be reported qualitatively, as a profile or other detailed description of what the student has achieved" (Lynch and Shaw, 2005, p. 265).

In conclusion, it can be said that like all the other types of assessment tools, portfolios also have some advantages and disadvantages. It is also clear that a single measure is incapable of estimating the diversity of skills, knowledge, processes, and strategies that combine to determine student progress (Wiggins, 1989). Thus, different assessment techniques should be used together to assess all dimensions of language learning. As Shaaban (2001) says "each form of assessment has its merits and uses, as well as its problems and shortcomings" (p.18) and because of the advantages they offer, portfolios should also have their place among the other types of assessment for a more accurate assessment.

## **2.5 Electronic portfolios**

In order to empower portfolios as an alternative assessment tool and overcome at least some of the disadvantages paper portfolios have, technology can be inserted into portfolio keeping process. Electronic portfolio is the portfolio saved in electronic format. The content of the electronic portfolio may be the same as the content of paper portfolio "but the information is collected, stored, and managed electronically" (Lankes, 1995, p. 7). Keeping an electronic portfolio may bring some advantages to the language classrooms. First of all, electronic portfolios may increase student motivation. Because many of today's students are interested in technology, using it for academic purposes may increase their interest in lessons and thus, they are motivated more. For instance, Mytkowicz (2005) concludes her article about the use of digital portfolios for diverse learners by writing about a bonus she received

after asking his students to keep the electronic portfolio throughout a semester: “A final bonus, demonstrated by improved class attendance, was that students seemed more motivated than when they had created traditional written portfolios in the first part of the two-semester course” (p. 29). Secondly, keeping electronic portfolios may bring advantages concerning storage issue. It may be difficult to save all of the students’ works in files; however, if they are saved in electronic format, saving our students’ works and transferring them to another teacher or institution can be quite easy. Another advantage of electronic portfolios is that using the computer while keeping an electronic portfolio may improve students’ written work by enabling access to language supports such as spelling and grammar checkers (Mytkowicz, 2004). The last but not the least important advantage of electronic portfolios is related to reaching more students in a more effective way. As Cole, Ryan, Kick and Mathies (2000) put forward, “Releasing the power of technology in the classroom via portfolios enables the teacher to reach more students effectively and efficiently, while engaging them in a more realistically meaningful process of learning” (p. 50).

Electronic portfolios may also bring some disadvantages both to the teacher, the students and the schools. The first disadvantage of electronic portfolios is to have access to all kinds of technological devices which can be used while keeping electronic portfolios. Computers, scanners, printers and digital cameras are some of the technological devices used while keeping electronic portfolios and they may cost a lot of money for the teacher or the school. The second disadvantage of electronic portfolios is the lack of computer literacy. Although many of the today’s students know how to use the computer, there are still many teachers who do not know how to use computer, which may prevent them from using electronic portfolios in their classrooms. Another disadvantage of electronic portfolios is that placing portfolios in an electronic format may take a long time especially at first.

Although they have some disadvantages, electronic portfolios should have their place in the educational world because of the advantages they bring to the classroom. As Cole, Ryan, Kick and Mathies (2000) point out,

As the learning curve begins to accelerate and both the teacher and student begin to develop and exploit both the potential and power of technology, they will soon see the results are worth the effort as another evaluation dimension is provided (p.59).

## **2.6. Some Studies on Portfolios at Turkish Universities**

A study (Subaşı, 2002) was done at Hacettepe University in order to find out teachers' understandings of projects and portfolios as tools for writing instruction and assessment, as well as what the teachers' ideas and suggestions about the new writing program were at Hacettepe University School of Foreign Languages Basic English Division. First, 34 instructors were given a questionnaire to learn about their understandings of using the projects and the portfolio. Then the director of the program and five participants were interviewed to gather more detailed information about their understandings of the new program and how it was implemented. The instructors' answers to the questions in the questionnaires and interviews indicated that the instructors participating in the program had a positive attitude towards the new program; however, they could not use them effectively. There was no clear understanding of the new writing program's instruction and assessment tools, the project and the portfolio, or a consistent implementation of it among the staff. That was because instructors' understanding of the projects and portfolios were diverse. For instance, " a large majority of the teachers could not see a difference between a portfolio and a student folder" (Subaşı, 2002, p. 79). However, the researcher believed that things could be improved through more in-depth teacher training.

The findings if this study implied the need for professional ongoing training throughout the program, which will combine theory and practice and help teachers to remove the question in their minds related to the program. The instructors also stated that time-constraints and heavy workload prevented them from giving enough feedback to the students. Unsystematic implementation of portfolios could have caused this problem.

A similar study conducted by Oğuz (2003) investigated state university preparatory class EFL instructors' attitudes towards assessment methods used at their institutions and portfolios as a method of alternative assessment. The study was conducted with 386 English instructors from the preparatory class programs of 14 Turkish state universities. Data were collected through a four-part questionnaire including closed-response and Likert-Scale questions. The results of this study revealed that both traditional assessment tools and portfolios had some pros and cons, which required using multiple assessment tools for a better assessment.

However, the instructors also stated the weaknesses of traditional assessment tools such as not taking students' learning differences into consideration and the weak relationship between the instruments they are currently using and student learning. The instructors also did not feel that these instruments encourage independent and collaborative learning and motivate students for learning. They thought that using portfolios would help the instructors to overcome these weaknesses and to communicate better with their students. "Further, the instructors firmly stated that portfolios should be used as a supplementary method to traditional methods of assessment" (Oğuz, 2003, p.81). In addition, the results made it clear that the instructors needed professional training "to have adequate knowledge of assessment in some areas such as interpreting the assessment results, or the relationship between assessment and instruction" (Oğuz, 2003, p. iv). Lastly, the results of the study emphasized that time limitation was another problem for the instructors, "which suggests the need for making some adjustments in the preparatory class curricula to achieve effective use of portfolios" (Oğuz, 2003, p. iv).

Another study done by Doğan (2001) at Gazi University, Ankara was about a portfolio development model for ELT students. She states that "researchers whose starting point is the need to integrate assessment with instruction and learning give a way to the shift in assessment system from traditional to alternative" (p.110). A questionnaire was administered to 100 ELT students and informal interviews were held with some of these students in order to collect data and the results indicated that students from different grades welcomed the portfolio system. Apart from this, the results indicated that portfolio system could be used in different courses. Different from the students, the instructors had some concerns about the use of portfolio although most of them had positive attitudes towards it. The instructors' main concerns were the fact that portfolio system was demanding and it was difficult to familiarize the students with this new system. A suggestion given by Doğan in order to overcome these problems was to carefully plan the integration of the new system to the existing system (p.112-3).

The only doctoral dissertation about portfolios which the researcher found had been written by Şahinkarakaş (1998). It was about portfolio assessment in writing classes. The findings of the study supported three hypotheses: (1) Implementation of portfolio assessment in a writing class improves students' writing

abilities (2) Portfolio assessment leads students to improve their metacognitive skills and to be autonomous learners (3) Portfolio assessment system is a reliable and valid system to be utilized in evaluating students' writing abilities. As for students' writing abilities, Şahinkarakaş stated that getting written and oral feedback in-between drafts from the instructor and the peers was very beneficial for students to improve their writing abilities. Concerning, students' metacognitive skills, according to the researcher, the first and the foremost indicator of metacognitive was awareness raising. When they got feedback from their instructors or peers, students' awareness about their strengths and weaknesses increased. Lastly, the results of the study supported the hypothesis that portfolio assessment system is a reliable and valid system to be utilized in evaluating students' writing abilities. The researcher stated that "establishing the validity and reliability of portfolio assessment system is very crucial since it is a qualitative approach to assessment" and "in order to receive a successful validation of the system, students' work should be judged by multiple raters, these raters should be trained carefully, and the procedure of the implementation should be carefully planned" (p.127-8). Aside from its advantages, the researcher emphasized two important disadvantages of using the portfolio assessment system in large-scale programs: extra workload of the writing teachers and the objectivity of evaluating portfolios. In order to facilitate the first problem, workload, assigning 1-2 hours of writing lessons to conferencing and scoring sessions was suggested to the writing teachers. Şahinkarakaş suggested that the subjectivity of the class teacher could be minimised by involving an outsider in the scoring procedure. She also stated that the class teacher, the student and the peers might also score the portfolio together in order to minimise subjectivity (p. 129).

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY

#### 3.0 Presentation

This chapter of the study covers the setting, participants, data collection instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis, components of the electronic portfolio, implementation and technological devices used for the implementation.

#### 3.1 Setting and Participants

This study was conducted at the Department of Basic English, School of Foreign languages, METU. The assessment at the Department of Basic English is mainly based on standardized and frequent testing. The students are given three midterms and about twenty pop-quizzes each semester. All of these exams aim at assessing grammar, vocabulary, reading, writing and listening. In addition to midterms and pop-quizzes, the instructors give a five-point performance grade (PG) to the students each semester. The instructors generally benefit from alternative assessment tools such as portfolios, presentations and journals for giving this performance grade to their students.

At the end of the year, DBE students take the proficiency exam offered by the School of Foreign Languages, METU. The main purpose of the Middle East Technical University English Proficiency Exam (EPE) is to determine whether students' proficiency level in English is enough to follow their courses in their departments and fulfill the requirements of the courses or not. That is why EPE focuses on English for Academic Purposes and includes questions which assess students' proficiency in reading and understanding academic texts, their ability to follow lectures, take notes and make use of these notes, as well as their competence in composing academic texts of varying length (*A Guide for Students and Test Users*, 2005). Although speaking is also an important skill necessary for success in academic life, it is not included in EPE, mainly, because of practicality. Considering the fact that DBE has a lot of students, assessing their proficiency in speaking

requires a lot of time. Thus, instead of assessing it through formal exams, speaking is sometimes assessed and practised through oral presentations and in-class activities.

In this study, 19 students studying English in an intermediate class at the Department of Basic English took part. Eleven of these students were female and eight of them were male. All of the students except for a repeat student were studying at the Department of Basic English for the first time. The students' educational background was diverse. While some of the students had studied at schools in which English education was compulsory, the others had studied at schools in which English education was either optional or hardly carried out. However, all of the students in the class had taken a placement exam based on which they were placed in this class. It meant that their current proficiency level in English was not very different from each other's.

The class in which the study was carried out was very suitable for this research because the number of the activities which could be done in an intermediate class was more than that in beginner or elementary classes. Therefore, I had the opportunity to do various activities in the class ranging from presentations, outside reading, extracurricular listening to writing paragraphs.

### **3.2 Data Collection Instruments, Data Collection Procedures and Data Analysis**

In order to increase the reliability, three data collection instruments were used in this study: two questionnaires given before and after the implementation (see Appendices A and B), informal interviews with the students and teacher reflection.

The questionnaire was selected as a research tool for this study because it allows the researcher to obtain a lot of data in a short time. The questionnaire items were written based on a detailed review of the literature on assessment, traditional and alternative methods of assessment, and portfolios and electronic portfolios as alternative methods of assessment. The questionnaires included items about students' educational background, their attitudes towards current assessment methods used in the class, their attitudes towards the electronic portfolio after they have kept it for about two months, their ideas about the content of the electronic portfolio, and their suggestions to improve electronic portfolios. After the questionnaires were designed by the researcher, they were shown to a native speaker of English working at the DBE, METU and an instructor working at the Department of Foreign

Language Education, METU in order to check the quality of the items in these questionnaires. Then, they were were piloted in another intermediate classroom and the questions were revised based on the feedback obtained from these two instructors and the students in that intermediate classroom. The questionnaires included both some open-ended questions and various types of closed response questions such as yes/no, multiple response and Likert-scale questions.

The first questionnaire had four parts and eighteen questions. The first part included three questions about students' attitudes towards traditional assessment tools used at DBE and alternative assessment. The second part included eleven questions about students' expectations related to the electronic portfolio. The third part of the first questionnaire included one question about computer literacy and two questions about access to computer and the Internet. In the last part, there was one question about students' previous experience of portfolios.

The second questionnaire had four parts and twenty questions. The first part included completely the same three questions about students' attitudes towards traditional assessment tools used at DBE and alternative assessment. The second part included eleven questions aiming at finding out whether the students' expectations about the electronic portfolio were met or not. The third part of the second questionnaire included five questions about students' suggestions about improving the electronic portfolio. The last part of the questionnaire included one question about computer literacy. This question aimed at finding out whether keeping an electronic portfolio developed students' computer literacy or not.

After the data were collected through these two questionnaires, they were analyzed with respect to the research questions. The first three open-ended items of both questionnaires addressed the first research question. The following eleven questions, six of which were rating questions (5-point Likert-scale) and four of which were open-ended questions, addressed the second research question. The five open-ended items in the third part of the second questionnaire addressed the third research question. The fifteenth question in the first questionnaire and the twentieth question in the second questionnaire addressed the fourth research question.

While analyzing the open-ended questions, the frequency of the answers was taken into consideration. A paired t-test was used to analyze the rating questions and

to find the mean and standard deviation of the answers to the related questions in the first and second questionnaires.

The informal interviews were held throughout the implementation and after students answered the questions in both of the questionnaires to go one step further. The interview questions asked during the implementation were about the stages they were going through. These questions aimed at finding out the problems the students faced at each stage and to answer their questions about the tasks they had to perform at that stage. The questions asked during the informal talks which were conducted after distributing the questionnaires and analysing the answers were determined by the results of the questionnaire and they aimed at obtaining deeper information about the students' experience of keeping the electronic portfolio, exploring the reasons behind the students' answers and making the students' ambiguous answers clear. When the informal talks were held outside the class, the questions were asked in Turkish to increase the amount of the feedback gotten from students.

Teacher reflection was another data collection tool used in this study. Because the study was an action research, the teacher's reflection about the process of students' keeping the electronic portfolio was considered to be valuable. For this purpose, the teacher took notes on the problems he and his students faced throughout the implementation and possible ways of overcoming these problems. Besides, the teacher took notes of the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation.

The researcher blended the data collected through the questionnaires, informal talks with the students and teacher reflection while drawing conclusions about students' attitudes towards the electronic portfolio.

### **3.3 Components of the Electronic Portfolio**

The electronic portfolio had six components. These components were making one oral presentation, writing three paragraphs, participating in two note-taking activities, writing the summary of the movie *Billy Elliot*, keeping a reading log and a writing a reflective essay about the overall electronic portfolio.

The most important parts of the electronic portfolio were oral presentations and writing paragraphs. As for the oral presentation, first of all, the students and the instructor talked about why oral presentations are so important in academic life and the qualities of good presentations. Then, they watched five presentations from

previous years and added some other characteristics to the list of the qualities of good presentations. Later on, the students decided about their presentation topics and after the instructor accepted these topics they started to search about their presentation topics. Because using Power Point came out as one of the qualities of good presentations, the instructor asked all of the presentors to use Power Point. Therefore, in the third week of the project, the instructor and the students went to the cinevision room and one of the students in the class showed his friends how to use Power Point effectively. Before the presentation day, the teacher had a conference with the presenters to see whether there were any problems about the presentations and to answer the students' questions. The presentations took ten to fifteen minutes and the instructor recorded all of the presentations with a digital camera. After the presentations, the rest of the class wrote feedback to the presenters and the presenters wrote self-reflection about their presentations. After that, the presenters watched their presentations on CD and wrote the final feedback about their presentations. The students were graded both on their performance during the presentation and their self-reflection about their presentations. While the instructor was grading the students' performance, he used the rubric prepared by both the instructor and the students.

In addition to making oral presentations, the students wrote paragraphs for their electronic portfolios. As one of the most important characteristics of writing portfolios, process writing was chosen as the kind of writing the students would do in the future. Thus, the students wrote their paragraphs at least twice. After the students wrote the first draft on diskettes, the teacher printed them out and gave feedback to the students' paragraphs by using some symbols. In other words, the teacher did not write about the mistakes or weak points explicitly. Based on the feedback they got, the students rewrote their paragraphs on diskettes. While preparing the CD for the electronic portfolio, the students' first drafts with the feedback on them were scanned. In this way, both the first and the second drafts were put into the CD. The students were graded both on the first draft and the second draft. The teacher took the rubric provided by the department into consideration while grading the students' paragraphs.

In order to enable them to improve their listening skills, the students were engaged in some note-taking activities throughout the semester. Some of them were

parts of the midterms and quizzes. There were also some extra listening exercises in the listening book and listening handouts. The notes students took during two of these activities and their answers to the related questions were scanned and put into the CD. The purpose of this activity was to display students' proficiency in note-taking and to show students the improvement they showed in note-taking throughout the semester. The students were graded based on the number of the correct answers to the related questions.

Another activity about listening was writing the summary of a movie. For this purpose, the movie *Billy Eliot* was chosen because nobody in the class had watched it before. The students took notes with pencil while watching the movie and then, when the movie was over, they wrote a summary of it again with pencil. After the lesson, the students wrote these summaries on the computer and the students submitted their summaries to the instructor on the following day. The students' summaries were graded on content, organization and language.

As for reading, the students kept a reading log. They chose at least one five-page article or story and wrote a summary of it and at least ten words they learned while reading that article or story on the computer. Similar to the previous activity, the students were graded based on the content, organization and the language of their summaries.

The last component of the electronic portfolio was a reflective essay about the overall electronic portfolio. In this activity, the students wrote about the overall process of keeping the electronic portfolio. They were asked to write about what they learned, the difficulties they met and to summarise what they did while preparing the electronic portfolio. The students wrote their reflective essays on the computer before submitting them to the instructor. The students were not graded based on this reflective essay because the purpose of this component was to get feedback from the students.

### **3.4 Implementation**

In the first week of the implementation, the instructor introduced the electronic portfolio project to the students. He explained the differences between the paper portfolio and the electronic portfolio. Then, because of the fact that students were not familiar with the term *reflection*, the instructor explained the meaning of

reflection and showed some samples of self-reflection written by other students. After students had an overall idea of the electronic portfolio project, the instructor distributed the first questionnaire to the students in order to learn about students' attitudes towards the electronic portfolio before the implementation and their expectations from the project.

In the second week, the instructor and the students worked on the most important two components of the electronic portfolio, namely, oral presentations and paragraphs. First of all, the students and the instructor discussed the qualities of good and bad presentations. Then, the students watched the recordings of five presentations and they identified their strengths and weaknesses. Later on, the students and the instructor prepared a rubric for the evaluation of oral presentations. Secondly, the students talked about the qualities of good paragraphs. After seeing that the rubric offered to the instructors by the Department of Basic English is similar to what they came up with, the students and the instructor decided to use that rubric for the evaluation of paragraphs. At the end of the week, the instructor gave diskettes to the students and asked them to write their first paragraphs the following week on these diskettes.

In the third week, the students submitted their first paragraphs. Most of the students had written their paragraphs on the diskettes. However, a few of them had written their paragraphs on paper because they did not have access to a computer or because they had some technical problems about their computers. In addition to writing their paragraphs, the students were involved in a note-taking activity. They took notes while listening to a text about genetics and then tried to answer some relevant questions by using the notes they had taken. Lastly, after talking about the qualities of good presentation topics, the students chose their presentation topics.

In the fourth week, the instructor wrote feedback to the students' paragraphs and scanned the paragraphs with the feedback on them before giving them back to the students. The students rewrote their paragraphs based on the feedback the instructor had written on their first drafts. In that week, the students also started to keep a reading log. For that purpose, the students would read a story or an article from one of the international magazines, choose at least ten words which they do not know and look up the meanings of these words. After that, the students would write

the summary of the story or article. In that week, the students also watched the movie *Billy Elliot* and wrote a summary of it.

In the fifth week, the students wrote their second paragraphs and they undertook the second note-taking activity. This time, the text was about an astronaut. Similar to the first note-taking activity, the students tried to answer some related questions by using the notes they had taken while listening to the text. In this week, the conferences between the instructor and the presentors also started. During these conferences, the instructor talked to the presentors of the following week, looked at their notes, checked their materials and answered their questions. These conferences continued until the eighth week.

In the sixth week, the students revised their second paragraphs based on the instructor feedback. In addition, oral presentations started in that week. The instructor recorded students' presentations by using a digital camera and then recorded them on CDs by connecting the camera to the computer by a USB cable and then saving the presentations on CDs by using the moviemaker program and a CD-writer.

In the seventh week, the students wrote their third paragraphs. The presentations and conferences with the presentors continued in this week too.

In the eighth week, the students rewrote their last paragraphs based on the instructor feedback and the presentations finished. In addition, reading logs were submitted.

In the ninth week, reading logs and reflective essays about the overall project were submitted to the instructor. In the same week, the instructor recorded all of the students' works on CDs by scanning them and gave CDs to the students.

In the tenth week, the second questionnaire was distributed to the students to see whether the implementation changed their attitudes towards the electronic portfolio or not, to see whether their expectations about the electronic portfolio were met or not and to have more feedback from the students about the implementation.

In Table 1, the summary of what was done in each week can be seen.

Table 1: The Timetable of the Implementation

Week	Activity
The 1 <sup>st</sup> week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The project of the <i>electronic portfolio</i> was introduced to the students.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> <i>Reflection</i> was defined and some samples of self-reflection written by other students were shown to the students.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The first questionnaire was distributed to the students.</li> </ul>
The 2 <sup>nd</sup> week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The students and the instructor discussed the qualities of good presentations.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The students watched the recordings of five presentations and identified their strengths and weaknesses.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> A rubric was prepared for the evaluation of the presentations.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The students and the instructor discussed the qualities of good paragraphs.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The rubric offered by the department was chosen for the evaluation of paragraphs.</li> </ul>
The 3 <sup>rd</sup> week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The first paragraphs were written.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The first note-taking activity was done.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The students decided about their presentation topics.</li> </ul>
The 4 <sup>th</sup> week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The first paragraphs were revised based on the instructor feedback.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The students started to keep a reading log.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> One of the students showed his friends how to use Power Point effectively.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The students watched <i>Billy Elliot</i> and wrote a summary of it.</li> </ul>
The 5 <sup>th</sup> week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The second paragraphs were written.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The second note-taking activity was done.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The conference with the 5th week's presentors was held.</li> </ul>
The 6 <sup>th</sup> week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The second paragraphs were revised based on the instructor feedback.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Presentations started.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The conference with the 6th week's presentors was held.</li> </ul>
The 7 <sup>th</sup> week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The third paragraphs were written.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The presentations continued.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The conference with the 7th week's presentors was held.</li> </ul>
The 8 <sup>th</sup> week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The third paragraphs were revised based on the instructor feedback.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The presentations finished.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reading logs were submitted.</li> </ul>
The 9 <sup>th</sup> week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Reflective essays were written and submitted</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Students' works were recorded on CDs by the instructor.</li> </ul>
The 10 <sup>th</sup> week	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The second questionnaire was distributed to the students.</li> </ul>

### **3.5 Technological Devices Used for the Implementation**

Some technological devices were necessary in this study, which may be a setback economically in some environments. In order to record the students' oral presentations, a digital camera was used by the instructor. A scanner was also necessary to scan the students' first drafts and the notes they took for the note-taking activities. In other words, not all of the components of the electronic portfolio were written on the computer. Instead, some of the components such as the notes the students took during the note-taking activities were written with pencil by the students and then they were scanned by the instructor to transfer these handwritten works to the computer. Apart from that, sometimes some of the students did not have access to the computer. That is why they wrote some of the assignments with pencil and the instructor scanned them to transfer them to the computer. In addition, both the instructor and the students used computers, diskettes and CDs while preparing the electronic portfolio. However, technical work was mostly done by the instructor, which was inevitable because most of the students did not have a CD writer or scanner.

## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

#### 4.0 Presentation

In this chapter, the analysis of the data obtained from the two questionnaires given before and after the implementation, informal interviews with the students and teacher reflection is presented.

#### 4.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this study was to find out students' attitudes towards traditional assessment tools used at DBE, alternative assessment in general and the electronic portfolio as a method of alternative assessment, students' suggestions to improve the electronic portfolio and the effect of keeping the electronic portfolio on computer literacy. In order to do this, four research questions were formulated:

1. What are the students' attitudes towards the assessment system by which they are evaluated and alternative assessment before and after the implementation of the electronic portfolio?
2. What are the students' attitudes towards the electronic portfolio before and after keeping it for two months?
3. What are the students' suggestions about improving the electronic portfolio?
4. How does keeping the electronic portfolio affect students' computer literacy?

To answer these research questions, two questionnaires were administered to 19 intermediate-level EFL students at the Department of Basic English, METU. In addition, informal interviews were held with these students and the researcher kept a diary during the implementation and took notes of the strengths and weaknesses of the implementation. After the data were collected through these instruments, they were analysed with respect to the research questions.

## **4.2 Students' attitudes towards the assessment system by which they are evaluated and alternative assessment before and after the implementation of the electronic portfolio**

The first research question of this study was:

*What are the students' attitudes towards the assessment system by which they are evaluated and alternative assessment before and after the implementation of the electronic portfolio?*

In order to answer this research question, three open ended questions which are believed to reflect the students' attitudes towards the assessment system by which they are evaluated and alternative assessment were asked in both of the questionnaires. The responses to these three questions were analyzed qualitatively by listing the commonly perceived answers to show the students' general tendencies.

### **4.2.1. Students' attitudes towards the assessment system by which they are evaluated before the implementation of the electronic portfolio**

The assessment system by which students are evaluated is based on three midterms and about twenty pop-quizzes a semester. Thus the related question in the questionnaire was formulated in the following way:

*Do you think that midterms and pop-quizzes are enough to enable you to show your proficiency level in all aspects of English? Why or why not?*

In order to analyze this question, firstly, the number of students who gave positive and negative answers was computed. Ten of the students gave positive answers to this question. The other nine students gave negative answers to the same question. In other words, at the beginning of the semester the number of the students who reported that midterms and quizzes were enough to show their proficiency level in all aspects of English was almost equal to the number of the students who disagreed with this idea. This shows that about half of the students in the class were aware of the fact that midterms and quizzes they have do not cover some aspects of English, especially speaking.

In Table 2, the reasons explaining the rationale behind the students' answers to the first question and their frequency are provided.

Table 2: Commonly Perceived Attributes of the Assessment System Based on Midterms and Pop-quizzes Before the Implementation

<b>Positive and negative attributes of midterms and quizzes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1. Their question styles are similar to proficiency exam.	2
2. There are enough number of midterms and quizzes.	2
3. Midterms are quite difficult and writing and listening quizzes are beneficial for the proficiency exam.	1
4. They do not include speaking.	6
5. They do not test listening sufficiently.	3

Out of ten students whose answers were “yes” to the first question, five students did not provide any reasons for their answers, which shows they may have said “yes” because these assessment tools are the only ones they are familiar with. Because of this, they may have thought that midterms and quizzes are enough to enable them to show their proficiency level in all aspects of English. Out of the other five students who gave their reasons for their answers, three students seem to have associated “all aspects of English” with the skills included in the proficiency exam. It shows that the students' perception of the foreign language proficiency may be determined by the exams they are evaluated by. If they are asked only grammar in the exams, students may think that grammar is the most important part of that language and they may ignore the other skills which are not evaluated in the exams. As a result, some students analyzed midterms and quizzes in terms of their contribution to the students' success in the proficiency exam and gave reasons for their answers accordingly. Two of them reported that these two assessment tools enable them to show their proficiency level in all aspects of English because their question styles are similar to the question styles in the proficiency exam. In the same way, another student reported that midterms are quite difficult and writing and listening quizzes are beneficial for the proficiency exam. Two other students focused

on the frequency of these exams and stated that the number of these exams, especially quizzes, lets students show their proficiency level in all aspects of English. In fact, this answer also shows the limitation on the students' perception of the foreign language proficiency imposed by the exams they are evaluated by. Although three midterms and about twenty quizzes are given to these students, there is no speaking section in these midterms or quizzes. However, these students seem not to be aware of this fact, maybe because there is no speaking section in the proficiency exam.

Among the nineteen participants who filled in the questionnaire, nine students' answers were "no" to the first question. Different from those whose answers were "yes", these nine students seemed to be sure about the reasons behind their answers.

The results reveal that the main insufficiency of midterms and quizzes stems from the lack of speaking in these exams. According to six students, midterms and pop-quizzes are not enough to enable them to show their proficiency level in all aspects of English because they do not include speaking. The other three students focused on listening and indicated that although there are a few listening quizzes and listening sections in the midterms, these assessment tools do not evaluate listening sufficiently.

When some follow-up questions were asked to these four students about their answers, it was found out that they found the number of listening quizzes insufficient because the listening section was thirty points in the proficiency exam but there were only three or four listening quizzes a semester.

In general, it can be said that at the beginning of the semester about half of the students in the class were satisfied with the current assessment system. On the other hand, the rest of the class were dissatisfied with midterms and quizzes because of their insufficiency regarding speaking and listening.

#### **4.2.2. Students' attitudes towards the assessment system by which they are evaluated after the implementation of the electronic portfolio**

At the end of the semester, when the students finished keeping the electronic portfolio, these questions were asked to them again to see whether keeping the

electronic portfolio changed their attitudes towards traditional assessment tools used at DBE or not.

The number of the students whose answers were “yes” (9) or “no” (10) to the first question shows that the implementation of the electronic portfolio did not change the students’ attitudes towards traditional assessment tools used at DBE considerably. Only one student who had given a positive answer to this question in the first questionnaire changed her answer. This may have resulted from the proficiency exam again because when the researcher administered the second questionnaire to the students, there were only ten days to the proficiency exam, which included grammar, reading, vocabulary, listening and writing, but not speaking or any other skills.

The analysis of the students’ reasons for their answers is shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Commonly Perceived Attributes of the Assessment System Based on Midterms and Pop-quizzes After the Implementation

<b>Positive and negative attributes of midterms and quizzes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1. They assess reading, writing, listening, grammar and vocabulary effectively, which is enough.	3
2. Their question styles are similar to the proficiency exam.	3
3. Especially reading quizzes are very beneficial for the proficiency exam.	1
4. We have them after we learn new things. They help us not to forget the things we have learnt.	1
5. There are enough number of midterms and quizzes.	1
6. They do not include speaking.	5
7. They do not assess listening sufficiently.	2
8. They only raise the level of anxiety and nervousness.	1
9. The number of the questions is limited.	1
10. Proficiency and midterm question styles are very different from each other.	1

The number of students whose answers were “yes” to the first question did not change considerably. However, in the second questionnaire all of the students gave the reasons for their answers. Three of these students wrote that midterms and quizzes assess reading, writing, listening, grammar and vocabulary effectively and according to them that is enough. It is possible that they took the components of the proficiency exam into consideration again while answering this question and did not mention any other skills because of this. Similarly, three of the students gave positive answers to the first question because the question styles of midterms and quizzes are similar to the question styles in the proficiency exam and another student wrote that especially reading quizzes are very beneficial for the proficiency exam. Two students emphasized other aspects of midterms and quizzes. One of them focused on the timing of these exams and said that having these exams just after something new is learned enables students not to forget these things. The other student reported that the frequency of midterms and quizzes is a big advantage for the students because it motivates them to study every day.

As for the weaknesses of midterms and quizzes, two of the most frequently reported weaknesses of midterms and quizzes are the same as the ones reported in the first questionnaire. Five of the students believe that midterms and quizzes are not enough for evaluating students’ success in a foreign language effectively because they do not include speaking and assess listening sufficiently. According to another student, these assessment tools create anxiety. It is a fact that many students are nervous during these kinds of exams, which prevents them from showing their real performance in different skills in English. Another student reported that because the number of the questions in these exams is limited they are not enough to enable students to show their proficiency level in all aspects of English. The last weakness of midterms and quizzes mentioned by another student is opposite to what the other students said before. According to this student, the question styles of these exams and proficiency are very different from each other, which is something true because a lot of multiple choice questions are asked in the proficiency exam while there are very few multiple choice questions in the midterms and pop-quizzes.

In overall terms, it may be concluded that the implementation of the electronic portfolio did not change the students’ attitudes significantly in a positive

or negative way. However, it is obvious that the students could explain the reasons behind their answers more clearly in the second questionnaire. The process of keeping the electronic portfolio may have caused this.

#### **4.2.3. Students' attitude towards alternative assessment before the implementation**

The second question in the questionnaire was about alternative assessment. Its purpose was to reveal whether some aspects of English which are not evaluated through midterms and quizzes can be evaluated through alternative assessment tools or not and which aspects can be evaluated in this way. The results show that 16 of the students in the class believe that alternative assessment tools can be used to assess some skills not covered by midterms and quizzes. Only 3 students did not agree with this statement.

The answers for the second part of the question point to mainly one skill that can be evaluated through alternative assessment tools, namely, speaking. Out of 16 students, 14 students reported that although speaking is not assessed through midterms and quizzes, it can be assessed through alternative assessment tools. Another student added critical thinking and academic searching to speaking among skills to assess through alternative assessment tools. One another student suggested only searching skill as the skill that is not assessed through traditional assessment tools used at DBE but can be assessed through alternative assessment tools such as portfolios and projects.

The third question in the questionnaire was also about alternative assessment tools. Its purpose was to reveal whether alternative assessment tools such as portfolios and projects can enable students to improve different aspects of their proficiency in English and show their real potential and performance or not. In addition, this question aimed at finding out which characteristics of alternative assessment tools would make this possible. The results indicate that about half of the students (10) believe in the power of alternative assessment tools in terms of improving different aspects of their proficiency in English and showing their real potential and performance. The other 9 students do not agree with this statement.

Although about half of the students said “yes” to this question, only two students explained why they gave positive answers and they said that alternative assessment tools enable the students to become more active.

Different from those who said “yes” to this question, many of the students who said “no” gave quite clear reasons for their answers. Only one student did not give any reasons for his answer. Five of the students stated that only alternative assessment tools are not enough for improving different aspects of their proficiency in English and showing their real potential and performance. They said that both traditional assessment tools and alternative assessment tools are necessary for this purpose. The other three people emphasized their study habits and they reported that if they did not take midterms and quizzes, they would not study.

#### **4.2.4. Students’ attitude towards alternative assessment after the implementation**

The analysis of the second question in the second questionnaire revealed that students’ attitude towards alternative assessment changed significantly in a positive way. Out of nineteen students, only one student gave a negative answer to this question, which indicates that the implementation of the electronic portfolio affected the students’ attitude towards alternative assessment positively.

Similar to the results of the second part of the second question in the first questionnaire, the analysis of the same question in the second questionnaire reveals that speaking is the main skill that can be assessed through alternative assessment tools. As Table 4 shows, the other answers include some other skills in addition to speaking. Only one student stated that alternative assessment tools do not enable students to practice any aspects of English which midterms and quizzes do not include.

Table 4: The Aspects of English That Can Be Assessed Through Alternative Assessment Tools According to the Students and Their Frequency

<b>Aspects of English to assess through alternative assessment tools</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1. Speaking	11
2. Speaking and academic searching	3

Table 4 (continued)

3. Speaking and listening	1
4. Speaking, research and reading	1
5. Speaking and using English out of class	1
6. Speaking and vocabulary	1

The answers to the third question also show that the implementation of the electronic portfolio affected the students' attitude towards alternative assessment positively. While 14 students gave positive answers to this question only 5 of them gave negative answers to the same question.

Not only the number of the students who gave positive and negative answers to this question, but also the variety of the answers is also different in the second questionnaire.

Table 5: Commonly Perceived Positive Attributes of the Alternative Assessment

<b>Commonly perceived positive attributes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1. They create less nervousness.	5
2. They enable us to practice speaking.	4
3. Students can improve their listening.	2
4. In comparison with one-hour exams, students have more time to do them and they require creativity.	1
5. Enjoyable activities inspire students to study and be more creative.	1
6. They improve research skills, speaking and socializing.	1

These responses reveal that according to some students (5) alternative assessment tools do not create as much nervousness as traditional assessment tools such as midterms and quizzes do. Out of 14 students, 6 students state that their practicing speaking and listening is another strength of alternative assessment tools. Other strengths of alternative assessment tools mentioned by three students are the

long period of time students are given to prepare their portfolios or projects, their inspiring creativity, the motivation they generate through enjoyable activities and their improving some skills such as researching and socializing, in addition to speaking.

Table 6 indicates that not only one-hour exams, but also some activities used for alternative assessment may create nervousness. Another problem about alternative assessment is the fact that the activities they include may be different from what students have to do in the exams they have. Two of the students mention this problem and say that these alternative assessment tools may not prepare them for the proficiency exam. In addition, students' answers to the third question show that the integration of traditional assessment and alternative assessment is necessary for better assessment.

Table 6: Commonly Perceived Negative Attributes of the Alternative Assessment

<b>Commonly perceived negative attributes</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1. Students can be nervous especially during the presentations.	2
2. They may not prepare us for the proficiency exam.	2
3. Both alternative assessment and traditional assessment are necessary.	1

#### **4.3. Students Attitude Towards the Electronic Portfolio Before and After Keeping It**

The second research question was about the students' likely attitude change towards the electronic portfolio. Thus it was formulated like this:

*What are the students' attitudes towards the electronic portfolio before and after keeping it throughout a semester?*

The purpose of the second research question was to see what students' attitudes towards the electronic portfolio were before keeping it and whether their

attitudes towards electronic portfolio changed after keeping it. For this purpose, seven Likert scale questions and four open ended questions were asked.

First of all, the mean scores of seven Likert scale questions in the first questionnaire were calculated by using SPSS. The results in Table 7 show that students' expectations about keeping an electronic portfolio were quite positive at the beginning of the semester.

Table 7 shows the mean scores of seven items in the second questionnaire which were higher than the mean scores in the first questionnaire. This indicates that after the implementation of the electronic portfolio students' attitude towards the electronic portfolio changed positively, though not drastically.

Table 7: Mean Scores of the Items About Students' Expectations Related to Keeping an Electronic Portfolio

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
5. Keeping electronic portfolio will be useful for my learning English better.	3,9474	,62126
6. Using technology in language learning process will be motivating for me.	3,7368	,87191
7. It will be worth spending so much time and devoting extra effort for keeping an electronic portfolio.	3,2105	,53530
8. Using an electronic portfolio will be an effective tool for supplementary assessment.	3,7368	,56195
9. Being a part of the decision making process related to the content of the electronic portfolio and assessment criteria will motivate me while I am doing the tasks.	3,9474	,52427
10. Knowing assessment criteria in advance will affect my performance positively.	3,7368	,56195
11. Seeing the change in my performance throughout the semester by looking at the artifacts on CD will help me to remember this semester as a more meaningful and useful semester.	3,8471	,50146

1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Uncertain, 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

N= 19

\*All mean scores are out of 5.00.

Table 8: Mean Scores of the Items About Students' Opinions Related to the Process of Keeping an Electronic Portfolio

<b>Item</b>	<b>Mean Score</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
5. Keeping electronic portfolio will be useful for my learning English better.	4,0000	,74536
6. Using technology in language learning process will be motivating for me.	4,0526	,70504
7. It will be worth spending so much time and devoting extra effort for keeping an electronic portfolio.	3,5263	,69669
8. Using an electronic portfolio will be an effective tool for supplementary assessment.	4,1579	,76472
9. Being a part of the decision making process related to the content of the electronic portfolio and assessment criteria will motivate me while I am doing the tasks.	4,2105	,53530
10. Knowing assessment criteria in advance will affect my performance positively.	3,9474	,70504
11. Seeing the change in my performance throughout the semester by looking at the artifacts on CD will help me to remember this semester as a more meaningful and useful semester.	4,1053	,56713

1: Strongly Disagree, 2: Disagree, 3: Uncertain, 4: Agree 5: Strongly Agree

N= 19

\*All mean scores are out of 5.00.

Table 9: Partial Results of the Paired-samples T Test.

	Mean	Standard Deviation	Standard Error Mean	T	df	Significance (2-tailed)
Pair 1 PRETEST- POSTTEST	-,26	,46	,11	-2,47	18	,024

A paired-samples t-test was conducted to evaluate to what extent the implementation of electronic portfolio project has changed students' attitudes towards the electronic portfolio. The results indicated that students' attitudes towards the electronic portfolio before the implementation (M before= 3.74, SD before= .33) and after the implementation (M after= 4.00, SD after= .40) which indicates the treatment positively affected students' attitude towards the electronic portfolio. The result reveals a significant difference between students' prior to and after the implementation attitudes ( $t(18) = -2.47, p = .024$ ).

#### 4.4. Students' Suggestions about Electronic Portfolio

The third research question was:

*What are the students' suggestions about improving the electronic portfolio?*

The purpose of this research question was to find out what the students' suggestions about improving electronic portfolios were. The researcher thought that the students would have some suggestions about different aspects of the electronic portfolio after keeping it throughout a semester. However, only a very limited number of students came up with some suggestions because they were quite satisfied with the electronic portfolio they were asked to keep.

#### **4.4.1 Students' Suggestions to Improve the Components of the Electronic Portfolio**

Table 10: Students' Suggestions to Improve the Components of the Electronic Portfolio

<b>Suggestion</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
1. There should be more speaking.	1
2. We should spend more time on the electronic portfolio, especially on oral presentation and note-taking activities	1
3. There should be more grammar work	1

As Table 10 shows, one student wants more speaking activities because she thinks that making only one presentation is not enough to develop and assess speaking skill. The second student suggested spending more time on the electronic portfolio because it was very useful and enjoyable. Another student wanted more grammar activities because they would be asked a lot of grammar questions in the proficiency exam. However, these students were in the minority and on the whole the contents and activities were judged to be quite satisfactory.

#### **4.4.2. Students' Suggestions about Omitting Some Components of the Electronic Portfolio**

Only two students want to omit some components of the portfolio. The first student wants note-taking activities to be omitted because he thinks that in real life note-taking is not essential. However, when I asked him some follow-up questions about the skills students have to use to be successful at METU, which is an English-medium university, he accepted that note-taking is a very important skill and should be a component of the electronic portfolio. As for the second student, it should be pointed out that she had a very negative attitude towards writing in general. She did not like writing topics the instructor, the book or handouts offered. Thus it is not surprising that she wants writing part to be omitted.

#### 4.4.3. Students' Suggestions about Adding Some Components to the Electronic Portfolio

Students' response to the related question shows that in general they are happy about the components of the electronic portfolio because only three students suggested adding some components to the electronic portfolio which were a bit more reading, grammar and translation activities. During the interview, two students who want more reading and grammar activities said that they want this because many reading and grammar questions will be asked in the proficiency exam. The last student who suggested adding some translation activities stated that there should be some optional activities such as translation activities for the ones who want to do some extra and different activities. She said that she wants to learn how she can translate a book or an article and what the important points are while making translation.

#### 4.4.4. Students' Suggestions about Guidelines

Table 11: Students' Suggestions about Guidelines

Suggestions	Frequency
1. Teacher should show more examples of the components of the electronic portfolio before students prepare it.	1
2. More information should be given about how to use Powerpoint.	1
3. Guidelines should give only general information about the activity. They should not limit me too much.	1

According to Table 11, some students may need more samples of the components of electronic portfolios. Another student emphasizes the problem of computer literacy and states that more training is necessary regarding Powerpoint. The third student points out an important rule about guidelines. She argues that the more detailed the guidelines are, the less creative students will be.

#### **4.4.5. Students' Suggestions about Grading System**

Only two students answered the questions about grading system and their answers show the participation and willingness of students should be taken into consideration in addition to the products.

#### **4.5. The Effect of Keeping the Electronic Portfolio on Students' Computer Literacy**

The fourth and the last research question in this study was expressed in the following way:

*How does keeping the electronic portfolio affect students' computer literacy?*

Using technology makes the electronic portfolio different from traditional portfolios. Students have to use the computer to be able to complete all of the components of the electronic portfolio. In this study, students used the computer for many purposes. This research question was asked to find out to what extent using technology for keeping an electronic portfolio contributed to the students' computer literacy.

The sixteenth question in the first questionnaire and the twenty-fifth question in the second questionnaire were about computer literacy. These questions focused on three important uses of the computer: Microsoft Word, Microsoft Powerpoint and the Internet.

The sixteenth question in the first questionnaire aimed at figuring out how many students already knew these computer applications. The students' answers revealed that although only five of them did not know how to use Microsoft Word and four of them did not know how to use the Internet, most of them (15) did not know how to use Microsoft Powerpoint, which is an important presentation skill in today's academic world.

The twenty-fifth question in the second questionnaire aimed at finding out how many students learned these computer applications while keeping the electronic portfolio. The results indicate that keeping an electronic portfolio enabled many of the students to learn how to use the computer applications mentioned above. About everybody who did not know any or some of these computer applications before

starting to keep the electronic portfolio learned how to use them while keeping it. Only two students who did not know how to use the Internet could not learn it after keeping the electronic portfolio. This is normal because none of the activities required the students to use the Internet. Some of the students used it while preparing their presentations but it was not compulsory.

#### **4.6. The Results of the Informal Interviews with the Students and Teacher Reflection**

In general, the data obtained through informal interviews with the students and teacher reflection were parallel to the data obtained through the questionnaires. Although most comments in the data were positive, some indicated the potential problems related to the electronic portfolio.

The researcher carried out informal interviews with the students in order to gain further information about what the students thought about the overall process of keeping the electronic portfolio, the problems they faced, their opinions about the strengths and weaknesses of the electronic portfolio and to make their ambiguous answers to the questions in the questionnaires clear. The researcher took note of the important points during these interviews.

The interviews held at the beginning of the implementation revealed that the idea of keeping an electronic portfolio had attracted some of the students while some others had been frightened by it because of several reasons. The students who were happy about the idea of keeping an electronic portfolio reported that they had liked especially the opportunity to use technology while learning English. Some of the students said that this was the first time they would use technology for an educational purpose, which had motivated them highly. In the following interviews during which the researcher asked the students some more detailed questions, it became obvious that they were also happy about the content of the electronic portfolio. As for the oral interviews, for instance, they admitted that they had avoided speaking English at all costs before because they had thought that speaking would not be useful for them getting higher grades in the exams they would take. However, when they started to study at METU, which is an English-medium university, they met the great challenge of speaking English in order to be able to participate in the lessons actively. They added that, because the current assessment system at DBE did

not compel them to speak English, they had not felt compelled to speak English. The oral presentations would require them to think about how to speak English fluently and clearly for the first time in their lives. They also pointed out that watching the presentations done by the students from the previous years was also very useful for their identifying the possible weaknesses and strengths of oral presentations. As for writing, the students stated that doing process writing as a part of the process of keeping the electronic portfolio would help them improve their writing significantly. According to them, the feedback given to the first drafts of the assigned paragraphs would let them write more accurate and coherent paragraphs. In addition, using the computer would also help them to improve their writing skill through spelling and grammar checkers according to some of the students.

Different from these students who had positive attitudes towards keeping an electronic portfolio, a few of the students had some concerns about its effect on their academic performance at the Department of Basic English. At the beginning of the implementation, they argued that doing so much work in order to keep an electronic portfolio was not worthwhile because it would be kept only for getting better performance grades, which meant five points at most. They also did not believe in the benefits of keeping the electronic portfolio because there was not much parallelism between the questions in the quizzes and midterms and the contents of the electronic portfolio. Thus the researcher had to explain that the main purpose of keeping the electronic portfolio was not only to get higher performance grades, but also to support the current assessment system with an innovative, meaningful and useful way of using English, rather than using an assessment method similar to the current ones. Another issue raised by these students was the fact that they would have to do everything they do in the class with a purpose related to learning English whereas in some of the other classes students did some of the activities such as playing games and watching movies only to enjoy themselves. At that point, the researcher had to explain how using movies could have been used for improving some skills in English and it would be a missed opportunity to use movies only for enjoying themselves rather than using them for improving their English. Another comment about the problems caused by the electronic portfolio was about the timing of some activities. In one of the interviews held towards the end of the implementation, one of the students underscored that spending a lot of time preparing

for her presentation just before the proficiency exam demotivated her and caused her to have more negative attitudes towards the electronic portfolio. She suggested the researcher should be more careful about the timing of the oral presentations. She offered to start working on the presentations in the second or third weeks of this kind of an implementation.

Teacher reflection was another instrument used to obtain data about the process of keeping the electronic portfolio. The researcher kept a diary in order to record his reflection about the process. He took notes of how he and his students felt at different stages of the implementation, what problems he and his students faced, the strengths and weaknesses of the electronic portfolio and his own opinions about how to improve the electronic portfolio. The first entries in the diary show that both researcher and the students had some questions in their minds about the process of keeping the electronic portfolio. For instance, the researcher did not know what the students' reaction would be to do so much work only for getting higher performance grades. In addition, he was wondering about students' performance in these activities. The students' questions, on the other hand, were mostly about what they would have to do to get high grades from different components of the electronic portfolio. Because they were not familiar with process writing, making oral presentations in English and reflecting on their own learning, the students had question marks in their minds about these components and they were a little nervous about being able to do these tasks successfully.

The entries about the following stages of the implementation, however, showed that the students could overcome these problems successfully and they had some other problems such as losing their diskettes and submitting their assignments late. After facing these problems, the researcher took notes of some possible solutions to these problems such as copying all of the students' works on his personal computer weekly so that even if the students lost their diskettes, they would not have lost everything they had produced. As for the second problem, the researcher thought that asking the students to submit their assignments on Fridays and giving the opportunity of sending their assignments through e-mails if they could not submit them on Fridays, would give them two extra days in order to complete their assignments and submit them to the researcher. The researcher also took notes of two students who could not use technology effectively. In time, they solved this problem

partially by getting help of their roommates at the dormitories. However, while thinking about how to help these kinds of students in the future studies, the researcher came up with the idea that the computer literate students in the class could teach their friends who did not know how to use the computer effectively to achieve this. This would also foster the supportive atmosphere in the class. Having sessions from computer assistants about how to use computer effectively at the beginning of the implementation would also be useful for preventing these kinds of problems.

Most of the diaries at the end of the diary focused on the contents of the electronic portfolio. The researcher had started to think that in another study who would take more than two months, it would be necessary to increase the variety of the activities and to let students choose one of the activities individually. The former would enable the process to cover more subjects covered in the class and the latter would enable the researcher to take up some of the students' suggestions of adding a few more components to the electronic portfolio such as translation activities and more listening activities.

In short, although not all students reported a wholly positive experience with the electronic portfolio, it was obvious that about all of the problems the students reported during the interviews or the researcher noticed and took note of in his diary could be solved by giving a little more attention to the overall organisation of the electronic portfolio and informing students about the rationale behind each activity.

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

#### 5.0 Presentation

In this chapter, first a summary of the study is given. Next, the findings and results are further analysed and interpreted. Then, some pedagogical implications are presented. Finally, some implications for further research are suggested.

#### 5.1 Summary of the Study

As some of the students participating in this study stated in their answers to the questions in the questionnaires, traditional assessment tools as they are used in the DBE have some drawbacks. Some students also report that traditional assessment tools used at DBE may inhibit their creativity. In addition, these assessment tools may cause a lack of motivation on students' part because the question types in these exams are generally similar to each other. Thus, a fair assessment system requires the use of some alternative assessment tools and portfolios are one of the most effective and common assessment tools used in foreign language teaching. This alternative assessment tool can be improved with the integration of technology in order to increase motivation, give better feedback, enrich the content of the portfolio and lead students to engage in self-reflection.

The aim of this study was to investigate the students' attitudes towards traditional assessment tools used at DBE, alternative assessment tools, the electronic portfolio, their suggestions to improve the electronic portfolio and how keeping an electronic portfolio affects students' computer literacy. For this study, 19 intermediate level EFL students at the Department of Basic English, METU were chosen as subjects. Then two questionnaires were administered to these students before and after the treatment. After the data were collected, the results were analyzed and discussed.

To summarize, this study found out that the students have quite a positive attitude towards alternative assessment tools and the electronic portfolio, which increased more after keeping the electronic portfolio for two months.

## **5.2 Discussion of the Findings**

### **5.2.1. Students' attitudes towards traditional assessment tools used at DBE and alternative assessment tools before and after the implementation of the electronic portfolio**

Students' answers to the question about their attitudes towards traditional assessment tools such as midterms and quizzes did not change significantly in the first and second questionnaires. The results of the first question revealed that about half of the students believe that midterms and quizzes are enough to enable them to show their proficiency level in all aspects of English. These students expressed their satisfaction with midterms and quizzes mainly because of the contribution these traditional assessment tools make to their success in the proficiency exam rather than their including all aspects of English. On the other hand, the rest of the class disagreed with this statement, which means midterms and quizzes, as they are implemented in the DBE, do not help these students to show their proficiency level in some skills, especially speaking. In addition, some students reported that midterms and quizzes are not adequate at assessing listening ability.

As for the students' attitudes towards alternative assessment tools, the majority of the students reported alternative assessment tools such as projects and portfolios to be effective in assessing some skills midterms and quizzes ignore. The results of the related questions changed in a positive way after the implementation of the electronic portfolio. While three students thought that alternative assessment tools do not cover any aspects of English which midterms and quizzes do not cover, in the second questionnaire only one student believed in this. In addition, while nine students reported their disagreement with the statement that says "alternative assessment tools such as portfolios and projects may enable you to improve different aspects of your proficiency in English and to show your real potential and performance" in the first questionnaire, only five students disagreed with it in the second questionnaire. Those who had positive attitudes towards alternative

assessment tools reported that assessment tools such as portfolios and projects may assess speaking, critical thinking, searching and other skills that traditional assessment tools used at DBE do not assess, and they make students more active, creative, and social but less nervous. In contrast, those who have negative attitudes towards alternative assessment pointed out that both traditional assessment tools and alternative assessment tools are necessary for more accurate assessment. They also reported that midterms and quizzes cause them to study more, alternative assessment tools may not sufficiently prepare them for the proficiency exam and, similar to the traditional assessment tools used at DBE, they may also create nervousness.

### **5.2.2. Students' attitudes towards the electronic portfolio before and after keeping it**

It was surprising that although only one student had kept a portfolio beforehand, the majority of the students had quite positive attitudes towards the electronic portfolio. In the first questionnaire, the mean of the seven questions about students' expectations from the activities related to the electronic portfolio was 3,73 out of 5. In the second questionnaire the mean of these questions was 4, which means the implementation of the electronic portfolio fulfilled the students' expectations to a large extent.

### **5.2.3. Students' Suggestions to Improve the Electronic Portfolio**

The results of the study show that because the majority of the students are satisfied with the electronic portfolio, few of them had suggestions to improve it. One of the students suggests spending more time on the electronic portfolio, especially on oral presentations and note-taking activities. Some students suggest adding grammar work and translation to the contents of the electronic portfolio. As for the guidelines, while two of the students want more samples about the components of the electronic portfolio and more guidance about using Powerpoint, one of them states that giving very detailed guidelines limits her too much and because of this she wants only general information about the activity. Lastly, as for the grading system, two students reported that participation and willingness should also play an important role while the instructor is grading students' performance.

#### **5.2.4. The Effect of Keeping the Electronic Portfolio on Students' Computer Literacy**

The students' answers to the related questions indicated that using the computer for carrying out some tasks was one of the most important problems students faced while keeping the electronic portfolio. The fact that fifteen students did not know how to use Powerpoint before the implementation of the electronic portfolio inevitably created some problems while preparing the presentations. In addition, five students did not know how to use Microsoft Word and four students did not know how to use the Internet before starting to keep the electronic portfolio. However, after keeping the electronic portfolio for two months, only two students out of four could not learn how to use the Internet. The other people who had stated that they did not know how to use Microsoft Word or Microsoft Powerpoint learned to use them while keeping the electronic portfolio. This shows that keeping the electronic portfolio may increase students' computer literacy dramatically, which may bring them many advantages in their academic lives.

#### **5.3. Pedagogical Implications**

The analysis of the data revealed some pedagogical implications both for the instructors and the administrators.

First of all, the results showed that although many of them did not keep portfolios beforehand, the students have positive attitudes towards alternative assessment tools and the electronic portfolio. If the relation between positive attitude and motivation is considered, it can be said that using alternative assessment tools may increase students' motivation, and in turn, this may increase their success in foreign language learning.

Secondly, alternative assessment tools should be used because as some of the students reported, it is necessary to use traditional assessment tools and alternative assessment tools together for more accurate assessment. While traditional assessment tools used at DBE are good at assessing many skills such as reading, listening, grammar and vocabulary, alternative assessment tools may enable an institution to assess some other skills such as speaking and writing. Using alternative assessment tools may also promote creativity and critical thinking.

The results of the study also indicated that there are some students who have concerns about the components of the electronic portfolio. They think that doing the tasks for completing the electronic portfolio may not adequately prepare them for the proficiency exam. At that point, instructors should be very careful while preparing the components of the electronic portfolio. The tasks it includes should either prepare students for their ultimate purpose, which is to pass the proficiency exam for many of the students in this study or include activities that other assessment tools do not include and will be useful to them after they pass the proficiency exam. In addition, students should be informed about the purpose of each activity so that they will not lose their motivation. Informing students about the purposes of each task may also prevent them from thinking that they are doing all these tasks only for the sake of using technology or doing something different.

#### **5.4. Suggestions for Further Research**

The limitations of the study, the feedback the students gave about the electronic portfolio and boundless possibilities for future classes highlight the need for further investigation in different ways.

This study was conducted in an EFL setting with 19 intermediate students at the Department of Basic English, School of Foreign Languages, METU. Therefore, the findings of the study cannot be generalized for all foreign language learners. However, conducting the same study with more subjects at different levels may help finding out about additional aspects of students' attitudes towards traditional and alternative assessment tools. Moreover, a longitudinal study, e.g., one semester and using other kinds of instruments such as students' keeping electronic or paper and pen diaries might be helpful in finding out about some other aspects of students' attitudes towards traditional and alternative assessment tools. The overall format of the electronic portfolio may also be changed by using the softwares designed for preparing more attractive portfolios or by displaying students' portfolios on web-pages at the end of the implementation. Therefore, this study can be replicated in several ways.

Another study aiming to explore the correlation between the assessment tools used and success in foreign language learning can be suggested to resolve some of the questions in related literature.

In addition, in another study students may be asked to keep completely electronic portfolios and they may be encouraged to do all the technical work. This may foster the students' ownership, which is one of the strengths of portfolios.

In order to obtain information about the effects of having their students' electronic portfolios on their future instructors, if the study were to be repeated with similar students, their electronic portfolios may be sent to their instructors at Modern Language Department, METU, and then these instructors may be asked to give feedback about whether these electronic portfolios have been useful for them to know students better and if keeping portfolios helped the students. Similarly, informal interviews may be held with the students in order to get feedback about the effects of using these electronic portfolios on their job and study applications.

Finally, the review of literature in this study has shown that in Turkey there are few studies conducted on the electronic portfolio. Despite some shortcomings, it is hoped that this research has made some contribution to the investigation of the issue. However, further research on this topic is essential if we want to improve the assessment tools we use to evaluate our students' success in foreign language learning.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX A**

#### **THE FIRST QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT THE ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO**

*Please read the following questions carefully and answer them.*

##### **PART A. QUESTIONS ABOUT STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT TOOLS USED AT DBE AND ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT TOOLS**

1. Do you think that midterms and pop-quizzes are enough to enable you to show your proficiency level in *all* aspects of English? Why or why not?
  
2. Do you think that alternative assessment tools such as portfolios and projects may enable you to practice some other aspects of English which midterms and pop-quizzes do not include? If your answer is "yes", please explain briefly what these aspects are.
  
3. Do you think that alternative assessment tools such as portfolios and projects may enable you to improve different aspects of your proficiency in English and to show your real potential and performance? Why or why not?

**PART B. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EXPECTATIONS RELATED TO KEEPING ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO**

Please choose only one answer for each statement. Please tick (√) the box.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. Keeping electronic portfolio will be useful for my learning English better.					
5. Using technology in language learning process will be motivating for me.					
6. It will be worth spending so much time and devoting extra effort for keeping an electronic portfolio.					
7. Using an electronic portfolio will be an effective tool for supplementary assessment.					
8. Being a part of the decision making process related to the content of the electronic portfolio and assessment criteria will motivate me while I am doing the tasks.					
9. Knowing assessment criteria in advance will affect my performance positively.					

10. Seeing the change in my performance throughout the semester by looking at the artifacts on CD will help me to remember this semester as a more meaningful and useful semester.					
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11. Will keeping an electronic portfolio help you to improve and show your proficiency level in many aspects of English? If your answer is “yes”, please specify what these may be.

12. Will writing self-reflection for some components of electronic portfolio help you become better learners? If your answer is “yes”, please explain how it may help you become better learners.

13. Are there any difficulties you expect to face while keeping electronic portfolio? If you answer is “yes”, please explain them briefly.

14. Please put a tick (✓) next to the group of the people with whom you want to share your electronic portfolio at the end of the semester.

- a. your classmates \_\_\_\_
- b. your parents \_\_\_\_
- c. people from other classes (teachers & students) \_\_\_\_
- d. your teacher at the next level \_\_\_\_
- e. administrators \_\_\_\_
- f. nobody \_\_\_\_

**PART C. QUESTIONS ABOUT COMPUTER LITERACY AND ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY**

15. Do you know the following computer applications? Put a tick (✓) next to the applications you know.

a) Microsoft Word \_\_\_\_      b) Microsoft Powerpoint \_\_\_\_      c) The Internet \_\_\_\_

16. Do you have access to computer? \_\_\_\_\_

17. Do you have access to the Internet? \_\_\_\_\_

**PART D. QUESTIONS ABOUT PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE**

18. Have you ever kept a portfolio in your class? If your answer is “yes”, please answer the following questions.

- a. When did you keep portfolio?
- b. In which lesson did you keep portfolio?
- c. Did keeping portfolio help you learn the subject better?
- d. Was the process of keeping portfolio enjoyable?
- e. Any difficulties you faced while keeping portfolio?
- f. What was the best thing about keeping portfolio?
- g. Any other comments you can make about the process of keeping portfolio?

Thank you for your cooperation...

Engin Yaşar

## APPENDIX B

### THE SECOND QUESTIONNAIRE ABOUT THE ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO

*Please read the following questions carefully and answer them based on the process you passed through while keeping an electronic portfolio during the last two months.*

#### **PART A. QUESTIONS ABOUT STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS TRADITIONAL ASSESSMENT TOOLS USED AT DBE AND ALTERNATIVE ASSESSMENT TOOLS**

1. Do you think that midterms and pop-quizzes are enough to enable you to show your proficiency level in *all* aspects of English? Why or why not?

2. Do you think that alternative assessment tools such as portfolios and projects may enable you to practice some other aspects of English which midterms and pop-quizzes do not include? If your answer is "yes", please explain briefly what these aspects are.

3. Do you think that alternative assessment tools such as portfolios and projects may enable you to improve different aspects of your proficiency in English and to show your real potential and performance? Why or why not?

**PART B. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE PROCESS OF KEEPING ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO**

Please choose only one answer for each statement. Please tick (√) the box.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly Agree
4. Keeping electronic portfolio was useful for my learning English better.					
5. Using technology in language learning process was motivating for me.					
6. It was worth spending so much time and devoting extra effort for keeping an electronic portfolio.					
7. Using an electronic portfolio was an effective tool for supplementary assessment.					
8. When the electronic portfolio project started, we were asked to participate in the decision-making process related to the content of the electronic portfolio and assessment criteria. Being a part of the decision making process on these issues motivated me while					

I was doing the tasks.					
9. Knowing assessment criteria in advance affected my performance positively.					
10. Seeing the change in my performance throughout the semester by looking at the artifacts on CD will help me to remember this semester as a more meaningful and useful semester.					

11. Did keeping an electronic portfolio help you to improve and show your proficiency level in many aspects of English? If your answer is “yes”, please specify what these aspects are.

12. Did writing self-reflection for some components of electronic portfolio help you become better learners? If your answer is “yes”, please explain how it helped you become better learners.

13. Did you face the difficulties you had expected to face while keeping the electronic portfolio? Did you face any unexpected difficulties? If your answer is “yes”, please explain briefly.

14. You should remember that one of the questions in the first questionnaire was about whether you would want to share your electronic portfolio with the following groups of people or not. Did you change your mind about them? Why?

- a. your classmates
- b. your parents
- c. people from other classes (teachers & students)
- d. your teacher at the next level
- e. administrators
- f. nobody

### **PART C. SUGGESTIONS**

15. Do you have any suggestions to improve any components of electronic portfolio?

16. Are there any components that can be omitted from the electronic portfolio?

17. Are there any other components that can be added to the content of an electronic portfolio?

18. If you think that the guidelines given to you by your teacher did not help you a lot while preparing the electronic portfolio, what are your suggestions to improve them?

19. If you think that the grading system of electronic portfolio was not fair, what is your suggestion to make it fairer?

**PART D. QUESTIONS ABOUT COMPUTER LITERACY AND ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY**

20. Which of the following computer applications did you learn while keeping the electronic portfolio? Put a tick (√) next to your answer(s). Please do not tick the applications you already knew when the electronic portfolio project started.

a) Microsoft Word \_\_\_\_      b) Microsoft Powerpoint \_\_\_\_      c) The Internet \_\_\_\_

Thank you for your cooperation...

Engin Yaşar

**APPENDIX C**  
**SAMPLES FROM STUDENTS'**  
**ELECTRONIC PORTFOLIO**