

## THE ROLE OF PORTFOLIO IN TEACHING ENGLISH

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**Abstract:** This study focuses on determining the impact of the portfolio on learning products on eighth-grade students in foreign language learning. In the research, the experimental design pre-test-post-test with a control group was used. In this twelve-week experimental study, two groups were randomly formed as experimental and control groups. The activities in the teacher's manual were used with the control group. However, portfolio activities were also used in the experimental group. At the beginning and end of the study, both groups received an ability test and a scale to measure attitudes toward English. Therefore, the impact of the portfolio on success and attitudes toward English was examined. An achievement test was developed consisting of 20 multiple-choice grammar and vocabulary questions, a 15-part listening test, a 15-part reading test, a 15-part speaking test, and a 15-part writing test. The English attitude scale consisted of 34 items. In addition, the students in the experimental group were asked five open-ended questions to find out what they thought about the portfolio. At the end of the research, it was found that the portfolio had a positive impact on student performance but had no impact on attitudes toward English. In addition, it had positive effects on writing, listening, and reading skills, but no effect on speaking skills. The evaluation of the open questions showed that the students liked the portfolio application and that they generally had a positive attitude toward learning English. On the other hand, the interview with the students made it clear that the students liked portfolio activities.

**Keywords:** effects of the portfolio, experimental study, grammatical structures, curriculum drafts

Nowadays, the importance of teaching English increases with the speed of information exchange. The understanding of traditional language teaching has been replaced by a communicative approach. The aim is for the students not only to use the language to learn the grammatical structures but also to communicate functionally with strangers. The innovations in language teaching have also had an impact on the assessment process. It can be seen that process-based evaluation was important in language teaching. And we see that in newer approaches to language teaching, more importance is attached to the process than to the product. Considering the transition from teacher-centered approaches to student- and learner-centered approaches, it can be said that process-based approaches should be included in curriculum design. The

basic hypothesis of process-based approaches is that, based on each language behavior, specific skills and strategies are used to understand or produce the language. The learning environment is important because it is in learning environments that students become aware of their abilities and potential. One of the process-based valuation techniques is certainly portfolios. Constructivist approaches are presented using portfolio studies. Because the student needs construction in their mind for each study and activity to be included in the portfolio. He/she reflects on his/her learning in his/her studies. From this perspective, portfolio application can be said to contribute to constructivist learning theory (Mhladz, 2007:22). Portfolio, which can be easily used in all areas of primary and secondary education, can be called a personal progress file, portfolio, or student portfolio in Turkish literature (Bahar, 2006:74). It will be useful to briefly mention the definitions to understand their contribution to language teaching.

Multilingualism is currently being encouraged and the importance of language learning is increasing to enable today's nations to keep up with rapidly expanding knowledge. The new approaches in education guide both teachers and students to actively participate in education. Therefore, traditional methods had to be replaced by new ones. The thoroughly teacher-centered system, in which the students as passive recipients only had a limited space for participation, lost its validity. Language teaching can only be undertaken as a task that focuses on the process rather than the product, aiming to teach communication skills and provide real-world environments for using the language. All of this certainly shows how much a student learns in the assessment processes of an alternative method of valuation, the portfolio has emerged as a result of these trends, but ideas about the functionality of its results have remained limited. Although there are several studies abroad, the number of studies on this topic in our country is limited. In particular, the studies on the effectiveness of portfolio exercises in English lessons are not sufficient. It is expected that this study will contribute to the evaluation process in foreign language teaching. This study aims to determine the impact of using portfolios in 8th-grade English classes on student performance and attitudes. In this study, a pretest-posttest experimental design with a control group was used.

The independent variables in this study are portfolio-building activities, and the dependent variables are students' academic achievement levels and their attitudes toward English courses. To collect the data, the researcher created an ability test that included knowledge, comprehension, and application questions and aimed to measure listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Students' attitudes toward English were assessed using the scale developed by Chanel (2002). The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the 34 elements was found to be 0.895. The multiple choice test consists of 20 knowledge questions and aims to test grammar and vocabulary. To assess reading

competence, 15 questions were asked about a reading text. Eight of these questions were true/false and seven were multiple choice.

Regarding writing skills, students were given blank forms and asked to write about an event they experienced in at least 15 sentences. For listening comprehension, students were asked to choose the correct picture from three pictures that were shown to them after hearing a title appropriate to their level. For speaking skills, 15 questions were prepared, each with only one correct answer. For each question, picture cards were prepared, which were shown to the students while answering the questions. Students received the competency pretest, and item test correlations, item discrimination index, and item difficulty index were identified.

The performance test and the attitude scale were practiced twice at the beginning and end of the semester. During the study, which lasted 12 weeks, both groups received activities that matched curriculum goals. The students of the experimental group prepared portfolios and activities to develop their four language skills and presented their work in class in addition to the above activities. It aimed to develop their speaking and listening skills. These presentations included activities such as debates, partner work, and dialogue practice. The activities were designed to be carried out outside of class, and at the end of each activity the students received feedback and their mistakes were corrected. The portfolio was formed with these activities: adapting a fairy tale or story to the present; being aware of your strengths and weaknesses and being able to express them in English; interviewing a family member, turning it into a dialogue, and acting it out in the classroom with a friend; making a list of the ten things he most wanted to achieve in life; to write about a person who influenced him the most and to give several reasons; Conduct an imaginary interview with a celebrity or a character they played by asking questions about what they did or where they went. creating a puzzle with the new vocabulary; Creating an advertisement or brochure about a well-known tourist destination or resort, etc.

Finally, based on the student's responses to the open-ended questions, it became clear that they were positively influenced by the practice and that they believed they benefited from this practice. It also became clear that the students spoke more English in class and increased their vocabulary. The students also indicated that they developed regular study habits and in this way improved their English exam results through portfolio exercises. On the other hand, the students explained that they had some time problems with this exercise because they were afraid of the exam at the end of this semester and therefore could not concentrate enough on the process.

When the mean scores for the four core competencies were compared, it was found that portfolio practice had a positive impact on students' reading, writing, and listening skills, but had no impact on speaking skills. These results are similar to those obtained in several studies on the effects of the portfolio on four basic skills (Fourie

and Niekerk, 2001). Brooch and Keshavarz (2002) also concluded that the portfolio technique has a positive effect on student performance. As Yueh (1997) found, portfolio practice has a positive impact on student performance. In addition, Bowman and Sue (1997) emphasized the potential effectiveness of the portfolio in their study. The study of writing skills conducted by Spencer (1999) supports the findings of this research. This study shows that the portfolio had a positive impact on students.

Kse (2006) found that the portfolio had a positive impact on reading skills and increased students' awareness of reading skills. As Belanoff and Dickson (1991) noted, the portfolio technique is a form of targeted pooling of student competencies. The portfolio is much more about developing students' writing skills. The portfolio did not affect my speaking ability. In his portfolio study, Ponte (2000) mentions the difficulties of doing homework for speaking. According to him, very little speaking practice can be done in the classroom and it is very difficult to develop such a skill if it is used a little or a very little outside of the classroom. The portfolio practice did not create meaningful meaning between the groups in terms of attitudes toward English. This finding is consistent with those also found by Starck (1999) and Erdoan (2006).

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