THE APPLICATION OF PORTFOLIO TECHNIQUE IN ENGLISH LESSON AT THE STUDENT CENTERED EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to evaluate both the usefulness (practicalness) of portfolio study in English preparatory classes and the retention of learning by considering extra-class activities while preparing portfolio. Fifty students and two teachers took part in this study. Special state method was used in this study. During the application, control group students continued their lessons with traditional teaching methods. At the end of the application, posttest was implemented to experimental and control group to test students' academic success. Approximately two months later the test which was applied to experimental and control group students as a posttest was applied again as a retention test. According to the results of the research, it seemed that experimental group which was applied portfolio was more successful than the control group in terms of academic success level, retention level and creativity.

Keywords: Portfolio, learning, retention, student centered education

INTRODUCTION

The reason of the knowledge explosion is the increase of information sharing and so shared information obtains new needs. In that sense people's learning needs and satisfying style have also changed. People began to organize their own learning with the question of *how do I learn.* In this context; instructors also try to obtain retention of learning more with the following questions: *How do I have to teach? How do I have to construct the learning and teaching process?* As learning is a process, it is essential to evaluate the process effectively to realize perpetual learning and student has to stuff this process with learning activities and teacher's guidance.

Students are able to develop the critical thinking, problem solving, researching, investigation, creative thinking, communication, constructing the information and using good language skills. Besides during the process they can take feedback from the results of both products and studies with the help of activities. According to these feedback student can direct himself and correct his mistakes with the guidance of teacher.

Students are able to practice their new knowledge and they exhibit their examples. Application of new knowledge and re-present them organizedly is crucial, especially in foreign language teaching.

Measuring and evaluating whether students' get these skills with traditional techniques is a conflict while using modern teaching methods. For that reason, portfolio plays a very important

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role as it gives students opportunity to be able to determine their own performance, practice their new knowledge and exhibit their studies. So, they can show their learning experiences to themselves, their parents, teachers and friends.

Paulo, Paulson and Meyer (1991) define portfolio as a combination of student studies that reflects learner's effort, development and achievement. In this context; learner actively participates in selecting the content and determining the selection of criterions (Tezci ve Dikici, 2002). Portfolio is useful for facilitating student-centered learning in the workplace and it is both valid and reliable when program goals are clearly aligned with classroom activities (Brown, 2002).

Portfolio shows similarity with one of the modern teaching models Winnetka System in which students' studies are got together, student's knowledge level is traced and is evaluated with testing whether student reaches his aim or not (Ergün ve Özdaş, 1997:34). Portfolio is completely student's special, own study. Student can add products from his studies prepared during the learning process; photographs, his own drawings or any study which he wants to add in this file. Portfolio is a living, growing and developing collection of student studies. Student should be able to explain logically why he preferred to add a product to his collection (MEB, 2004). It can be said that portfolio is a material of both the process of learning-teaching and evaluation.

As the part of the portfolio process, students are asked to think about their needs, goals, weaknesses and strengths in language learning. They are often asked to select their best work and to explain why the work is valuable to them (Barootchi and Keshavarz, 2002).

It doesn't mean that portfolio includes every study of the student. Student begins to manifest criterions of a good study showing what he has to put in his file study with a good guidance and samples. It's expected from students collecting and selecting the products and suggesting opinions for his file (Gibbs, 2004). Students express themselves better and studies which they prepared obtain more meaningful for their learning with this study.

Portfolio, which is combined together with classroom activities, is an evaluation method for both teacher and student. It consists of reflection. It improves student's self-discipline and responsibility and it helps students to gain self-evaluation skill (http://programlar.meb.gov.tr). Such assessments tell students and their instructors how well they are developing their skills and knowledge and what they need to do to develop them further (Barootchi and Keshavarz, 2002).

Students who are evaluated with portfolio have opportunity to study and review in larger time without examination period limitation and manifest sufficiency degrees according to criterions. Students are encouraged to study in cooperation (http://earged.meb.gov.tr).

Portfolio gives opportunity to revise and improve his study. This revision and improvement submit prepared studies in evaluation to get more qualified result. It obtains opportunity to take positive criticism for both present and future studies (Erbil ve Demirezen, 2004). Student is able to improve his file reviewing his previous studies as well as evaluating feedbacks from his teacher. Before evaluation of the files (portfolio), some criterions are definite and the teacher evaluates the files.

As it is seen; portfolio is used for both student's assessment and his active participation to learning-teaching process. Using a language effectively is also necessary in foreign language

teaching. Language learning becomes permanent by usage of language. Portfolio is also beneficial to be able to obtain retention of learning and assessment of improving in foreign language teaching.

Purpose of Study

Student centered education applications are organized to obtain permanent learning in foreign language teaching like entire instructional fields. Student has to learn language with using it directly in the learning process to obtain permanent learning. Student's activities, learning materials, exercises, stories which are built up when he is preparing his file obtains student to use language actively.

In this regard; the purpose of this study is to increase the usability of portfolio study in teaching English as a foreign language and to obtain academic success and retention of using English in extra-class activities with portfolio file. Under this general propose, answers are tried to find out to following questions.

Problem

What is the affecting level of portfolio on the students' academic success, retention and creativity in student-centered education?

Sub-problems
1. What is the affecting level of portfolio on students' academic success?
2. What is the affecting level of portfolio on retention of learning?
3. What is the affecting level of portfolio on creativity?

Assumptions

The experimental group students who joined the portfolio study prepared the file rigorously with comprehending the qualification of file, content and aim. On the contrary, traditional teaching was used in control group's lessons.

Limitations

The study is restricted with experimental (25) and control (25) groups students. Portfolio studies prepared by students are restricted with English lesson.

Definitions

Portfolio: It is an individual developing file in which student collects his favorite studies and presents his field of interest, his skills and his special studies to his teacher, parents and friends.

Traditional Education: It is a way of teaching which teacher is active, students are passive and usually lecture and question-answer methods are used.

Student Centered Education: It is a way of teaching which students actively participate in the lesson, teacher guides the students and encourages them to interrogate and research.

METHOD

In this research, 50 students from two different classes and 2 English teachers took part in application from İsçehisar Anatolian High School in Afyonkarahisar. The study was implemented to two preparatory class students in second term of 2005-2006 academic year. In

this study, practicability of portfolio is researched for English lesson and pretest-posttest assignment with the randomized matching control group design is used.

Before the application to select students whose levels are close to each other; pretest (reliability(α)=.63) was implicated to experimental and control group students and 50 students whose points close to each other are selected. These selected 50 students are divided in two groups of twenty-five as an experimental and control groups.

At the beginning of the application informative cards were given out to students about portfolio's content, aim, assessment style and the process of application and students took responsibility. Teacher guided students in necessary situations about portfolio studies. During the study, student and teacher examined the files together and then teacher gave feedback to students about the file. Portfolio included reading, writing, speaking, vocabulary and grammar subjects. Pictures, articles, projects, group-working studies, English short stories, records about the learned subject took place in portfolio. The aims of all prepared studies took place in the file.

During the application, control group students continued their lessons with traditional teaching methods (Lecture, question-answer and discussion techniques are used for all students with teacher's leadership during process). Attention was paid not to use the same methods between the control group and the experimental group. At the end of the application, posttest was implemented to experimental and control group students to test students' academic success.

Experimental group students exhibited their studies to friends and teachers. During the presentation, they stated why they selected these studies. Approximately two months later the test which was applied to experimental and control group students as a posttest was applied again as a retention test.

Arithmetic mean, standard deviation statistic processes were used for interpreting and analyzing of data received from posttest and retention test. Besides, t test was applied to compare each two group of students' answers' mean to 25 questions and data were analyzed on computer with 0,05 significance level.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings received from the research were arranged according to sub-problems given above:

What is the affecting level of portfolio on students' academic success?

At the end of the application, as a result of test with a view to measure experimental and control group students' academic success; experimental group's mean was 70,04 and its standard deviation was 10,26. However it was calculated that control group's mean was 57,4 and standard deviation was 4,74(Table 1).

The difference of results between the groups were significant for 0,05 level about academic success level ($p < 0,05$). As an average, it is determined that this difference is in experimental group's favour. According to these results, experimental group students who prepared portfolio file are more successful than control group students who continued their lessons with traditional teaching methods considering academic success level in foreign language lesson.

Table 1. Comparison Between Experimental and Control Groups' Academic Success Level.

	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	df	t	p
Experimental	25	70,4	10,26				
Control	25	57,4	4,74	12,96	48	5,73	0,00

(p<0,05)

Some of the empirical studies conducted earlier reported that implementing portfolio assessment does appear to have salutary effects on instruction, student learning and attitudes. Portfolio assessment does contribute to EFL learners' achievement, because assessment instruments like portfolios provide feedback to both teachers and students (Barootchi and Keshavarz, 2002: 285).

Sub-problem; What is the effect level of portfolio on permanence of learning?
Approximately two months later, the posttest was applied again to students to test retention of learning at the end of the application. According to data of retention test; experimental group's mean is 73,76 and its standard deviation is 9,02. As a result of this test; control group's mean is 62,08 and its standard deviation is 15,04(Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of Groups About Retention Level. (p<0,05)

	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	df	t	p
Experimental	25	73,76	9,02				
Control	25	62,08	5,04	11,68	48	5,64	0,00

(p<0,05)

So that difference between the groups for 0,05 level is significant in experimental group's favour about retention of learning (p<0,05). According to these results, experimental group students who prepared portfolio file are more successful than control group students who continued their lessons with traditional teaching methods at retention level in foreign language lesson.

Sub-problem: What is the level of affect of portfolio on creativity?
At the end of the study, in the test which was applied to students, there was a part to test students' creativity power and this part was assessed on a scale of 30 points. In this part, the students were asked to write a quatrain with using given key English words and completing the sentences appropriately according to given situations. So that the affect of portfolio study on experimental and control group students' creativity power was researched. As a result of this part's analysis; it was determined that experimental group's mean is 21,04 and its standard deviation is 3,27 however control group's mean is 16,32 and its standard deviation is 2,42 (Table 3). So that difference between the groups for 0,05 level is significant in experimental group's favour. Thus, it can be said that portfolio improves student's creativity power as well as students' academic success and retention level.

Table 3. Comparison of Groups About Creativity Power

	N	Mean	SD	Mean Difference	df	t	p
Experimental	25	21,04	3,27				
Control	25	16,32	2,42	4,72	48	5,79	0,00

(p<0,05)

It was observed that retention test mean was higher than success test (posttest) during application. Because of language learning continues in a life-long process, it was seen that the groups' students' language development continued in two month process. However, it was determined that success level mean was almost constant between the control and experimental groups.

As part of the portfolio process, students were asked to think about their needs, goals, weaknesses and strengths in language learning; they were often asked to select their best work and to explain why the work is valuable for them. Learner reflection in a portfolio makes an important contribution to the triangulation of information in the assessment process (Huerta-Macias, 1995).

At the end of the portfolio study, portfolio folder prepared giving information about the studies and explaining why these studies were chosen to make learning permanent. During these presentations, repetition of the items enabled both the presenters and the listeners to learn permanently. Students' exhibition of their own products and their active presentation help to increase their self-confidence. In addition, it improves student's feelings of responsibility by taking responsibility and continuing it to the end.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

According to findings which are obtained at the end of the analysis of research data, the experimental group students on who portfolio is applied are more successful than the control group students on who traditional education model was applied at academic success level, permanence level and the creativity. This result is the same works both in Turkey and other countries.

Learners go through their own work and base on criteria with which they have been familiarized, choose their best piece of work and explain why it is valuable. Therefore learner reflection in a portfolio makes an important contribution to the triangulation of information in the assessment process which leads to beneficial achievement (Barootchi and Keshavarz, 2002:285).

The parents, teachers and students became more aware of academic growth by preparing portfolio in the classroom. The students also felt more empowered in their own learning and became more reflective about their work (Koelper and Messerges, 2003:37). Because of the frequent feedbacks during preparation of portfolio, it gives students opportunity to evaluate themselves and it gives students auto-criticism. Moreover, it enables teacher to follow his student's development process easily with portfolio.

The selection of studies which were added in portfolio by the student, gives advantage for understanding of his abilities and his fields of interest. And it is rather important to review the studies for the following of improvement from the beginning of the process to end of it (Toper, 2004). Portfolio can provide a showcase of students' abilities, talents, interests and potentials. Portfolio was rather effective for determining students' field of interest during the application. With this aspect, portfolio guides to the teacher and students.

Students can see their self development reflections with portfolio. Portfolio enforces students to turn back and see which level they started and which level they finished it. It is easier to correct the mistakes with portfolio because students can turn back and look what they did and this gives opportunity to be successful (Koelper and Messerges, 2003).

It was determined that students' success increases their motivation by enabling them notice their own success and students continue their studies more attentively. During the preparation of portfolio it was observed that the teacher, student and parents shared the responsibility and students prepared their studies more easily. Students had a chance to show their special studies to their parents, friends and teacher and increased their self-confidence.

Communication is advanced among student, teacher and parents with these portfolio studies. It helps students to exhibit their best works which were prepared individually or cooperatively and to aware of their own learning without pressure and time limitation. It prevents individualism from being lost in a class in which students have different qualifications.

During the presentations students' usage of correct language, self expression and creating a good composition skill have developed. According to theory of multiple intelligences, students whose verbal-linguistic intelligence were dominant showed their skills during the presentation, students whose social intelligence were dominant took a good place in group works and students whose visual intelligence were dominant arranged and designed their files very attractively.

As a result of this study it was observed that students who prepared portfolio became more social, aware of their own learning and completed insufficiencies more easily with teacher's guidance and were more willingly to learn. Because of long process of preparation of portfolio in the case of preparing for different lessons at the same time, it causes problems for students. It can be appropriate to prepare portfolio in foreign language learning classes which doesn't cause similar problems.

Perhaps the study can not fulfill the aim appropriately when the necessary guidance isn't done by the teacher especially to the students who made this study for the first time. For that reason teachers have to give enough information both to students and parents about the study. Teachers have much more duties to include the parents in portfolio studies at schools where the rate of literacy is low and to include parents in some rural regions most of who do not give enough care to their children.

These sorts of studies should be widespread after application to different fields (according to application results). Portfolio has many facilities to provide students opportunities to develop an individual view of language education and it guides to the students. However, it isn't sufficient for general evaluations, competition exams and determining student's language success in a big group.

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