



Promoting Learner Autonomy Through Portfolio

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Abstract

This paper is intended to remind language educators to enhance student's learning and develop learner autonomy through portfolio as a learning tool. It aims to show the progress done in the field of autonomy and the portfolio in language learning. Since these two terms are not new, this paper aims at discussing the concept of autonomy and its different interpretations, and benefits of the use of portfolio during the process of raising autonomy in learning a foreign language. The paper begins with definitions and brief theoretical information about learner autonomy. Then, it introduces the English Language Portfolio and portfolio assessment, and benefits of it considering the relationship between autonomy and portfolio in language learning classrooms. The paper implies that the use of portfolio, as a learning tool, is vital to promote learner autonomy in the language learning. Finally, it presents three examples of the portfolio in different institutions; along with a conclusion. I hope this paper will be useful to language teachers who wish to promote learner autonomy through portfolios and reconsider their foreign language curriculum in their own contexts.

Keywords: Autonomy, learner autonomy, portfolio, portfolio assessment.

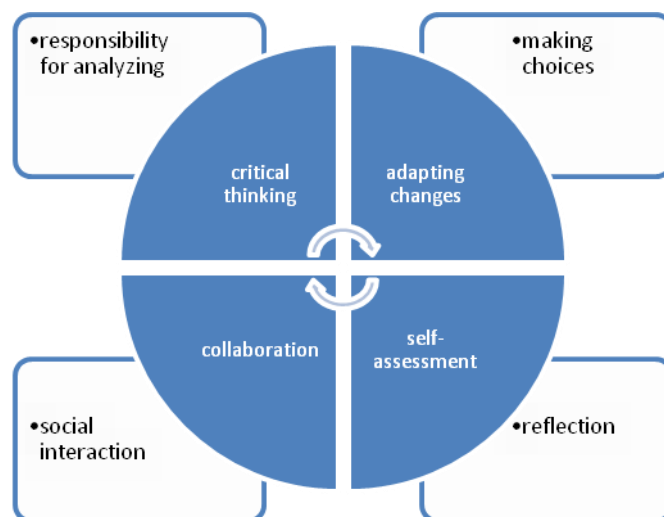
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INTRODUCTION

“Treat people as if they were what they ought to be, and help them become what they are capable of being”. Goethe

English language teaching has witnessed remarkable innovations in the last four decades throughout the world. These changes have significantly resulted in student-centered, task-based, communicative approaches. These approaches are still in use, but in time, they have been improved and a more ambiguous word has come out; “autonomy”. For a long time, learning English has been both teacher-centered and book-centered where teachers are expected to cover the curriculum developed by the government or their respective institutions. Therefore, textbooks are designed to teach grammar, reading, writing without much emphasis on listening and speaking. However, the beginning of the 21st century, such a teacher-centered classroom does not reflect contemporary society. Both nationally and internationally designed curricula give learners the opportunity to choose and create at both process and product levels of their learning. The previous passive way of learning has been replaced by active learning as the focus moves from teaching to learning. Similarly, traditional assessment has moved away from assessing just knowledge to performance-related authentic assessment.

According to many researchers, fostering autonomy, and promoting autonomous learners in language learning is achieved through the use of portfolio, which is a tool for continuous learning much beyond formal education. Portfolios and portfolio assessment will allow learners to become aware of their abilities during their learning so that learners are not only prepared for the challenges of learning, but also for the challenges of life. By this way, it is possible to make them life-long learners. Portfolios can serve as a vehicle for enhancing student awareness of the following strategies for thinking about and producing work, both inside and beyond the classroom;



This paper aims to remind teaching professionals the importance of learner autonomy in language learning to make their learners conscious and efficient users of language. The paper will have a brief look at the ways in which autonomy is described in different educational contexts, and also give brief theoretical information about the concept. The paper will explore the relationship between learner autonomy and the portfolio as a learning tool in learning a foreign language in general. When we analyze the background of these terms, we see that autonomy and the portfolio are mainly being used by European countries. For the last decade, there have been some corresponding implementations of these concepts in some Eastern countries as well. It is not a new topic in Turkey, but I wanted to emphasize that we should encourage our learners to be autonomous in their language learning process as well as in their fields of study. The portfolio should be promoted because it is a learning tool which leads them to become autonomous in their lifelong education. Although it is considered being exciting, it is challenging for both teachers and learners.

Autonomy: The Concept of Autonomy and Autonomous Learning

Morpheus: "I'm trying to free your mind, Neo. But I constantly show you the door. You're the one who must walk through it". The Matrix

The word 'autonomy' is not something new in language teaching since it has been discussed for more than forty years. However, according to the literature, it has been ignored mostly by educators both in Turkey and in most other countries. This is due to many reasons and one is that it has not been well understood and well promoted in language learning classrooms. It has been rejected by many practitioners and has received negative feedback from many educational theorists and educators (Sinclair, 2000). For these reasons, it might have gained more importance in the last two decades when autonomy has been described in various ways in the field of language learning. Today, there are numerous definitions and interpretations of autonomy in connection with language learning. The most often quoted definition cited in many sources belongs to Holec, who states, "Language learners are able to take charge of their learning". According to him, a person taking charge of his own learning means having and holding the responsibility for all decisions concerning all aspects of this type of learning. Ideally, autonomous learning contains:

- determining the objectives,
- defining the contents and progressions,
- selecting methods and techniques to be used,
- monitoring the procedure of acquisition...,
- evaluating what has been acquired (Holec, 1981:3).

Not only Holec, but also Dam (1995:1) characterizes learner autonomy as one person's taking charge of his learning due to his goals and needs. The level autonomy a person develops in his learning is determined by that person's capacity and willingness to act as a socially responsible person by acting in cooperation with others independently. Holec (1981:3) supports the same theory stating that;

“Autonomy is thus a term describing a potential capacity to act in a given situation – in our case – learning, and not the actual behavior of an individual in that situation”.

So, it is a fact that to achieve autonomy, person’s capacity and willingness are two significant factors during the process. Little (1997:428) makes a similar definition to Holec’s;

“We can define an autonomous person as one who has an independent capacity to make and carry out choices which govern his or her actions. The capacity depends on two main components: ability and willingness...”.

Moreover, Littlewood (1996:97) explains autonomy as “learners’ ability and willingness to make choices independently.” And he continues;

“Ability depends on possessing both knowledge about alternatives from which choices have to be made and necessary skills for carrying out whatever choices seem most appropriate. Willingness depends on having both the motivation and confidence to take responsibility for the choices required”.

We all know that we are not born as autonomous learners. It is not something that comes from our birth; it is acquired through the process of our learning. Holec (1981:3) once more clearly states;

“This ability (to take charge of one’s learning) is not inborn but must be acquired either by ‘natural’ means or (as most often happens) by formal learning; i.e. in a systematic, deliberate way”.

While discussing the meaning of autonomy, there should be no misunderstanding or misconception about it being a goal for educators to be implemented in their own classrooms. We all know that there are other learning strategies to be promoted as well. Also, during the process, we can come across with as many social and economical constraints as political and cultural. Therefore, promoting autonomy should not be considered as the sole aim to be achieved but rather be integrated into our teaching practices. Boud (1981:23) supports the idea;

“Autonomous learning is not an absolute standard to be met, but a goal to be pursued; what is important is the direction – towards student responsibility for learning – not the magnitude of the change in any given direction”.

Therefore, just awareness rising is not enough but also empowerment is another focus to be recognized thus it is one of the keys in learning. It is empowering learners to take more responsibility for their own learning than they have previously done. Many researchers and educators agree that autonomy cannot be attained in just one night. It has to be accomplished in varying degrees. There are degrees of autonomy as Sinclair (2000:8) describes the first degree which lacks total autonomy as the “vegetative” degree and the next one as “idealistic” where the learner becomes fully autonomous. However, research indicates that there is no complete autonomy

because autonomy varies from one learner to another, and skill to skill or task to task. Sinclair (2000) states that autonomy reveals great differences due to some factors beyond individual; it is the environment where learning takes place, the psychology of the learner feelings such as mood or hunger, motivation and so on. Nunan (1996:20-21) says;

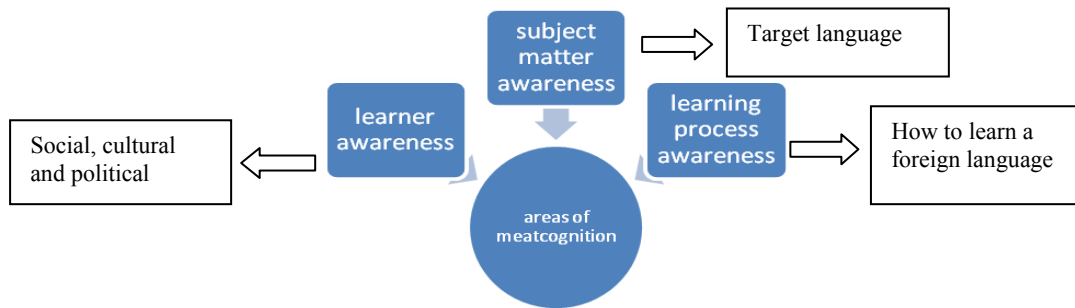
“There are identifiable differences in the ways in which different learners approach the task of learning another language.”

And these will be reflected in their learning to the extent that they desire autonomy or are capable of developing it.

Some learners will benefit from the work, but some others will not develop during the learning period. Dickinson and Craver (1980) argue that psychological and methodological developments are also requirements of the process as well as self-direction. Dressel and Thompson (1973:45) support it by saying that;

“Independent study is the student’s self-directed pursuit of academic competence in as autonomous a manner as he is able to exercise at any particular time”.

Self-direction leads the learners to become more conscious of what they are doing in their learning. Some learners are aware of what they are doing whereas some learners do not. In the process of learning, if learners are not trained well, they can attain some inappropriate strategies that come out automatically. In other words, it happens either consciously or unconsciously. Therefore, metacognitive awareness is an effective key in learning since it is in-cooperation with language awareness, cognitive awareness, social awareness and cultural awareness (Ellis, 2000). It is significant that if metacognitive awareness is ignored, teachers should be encouraged, thus sometimes they can be resistant, to reflect on why and how learners are not successful. The result will be positive and conscious reflection will help them to motivate themselves and build their self-esteem and confidence as learners in their own learning process. If learners are not conscious of what they are doing, they will not be able to make correct decisions about their learning. Learners in order to become autonomous in their learning, they need to be actively involved and participate in the process so that they can individualize the learning. They need to make decisions about reflection, planning, setting their goals, assessing themselves, and assessing the learning activities and learning resources to become autonomous (Sinclair, 2000). Sinclair also emphasizes that learners need three areas of metacognition during the learning process to become autonomous;



Learner awareness develops throughout the life, and can be fostered by designing a healthy and realistic learning environment so that learners can show personal growth in their learning process. Here learners feel more secure thus they become more competent towards others in social, cultural and political contexts. Subject matter awareness is also another area in language learning. It is obvious that although classrooms provide an environment and opportunities for the use of target language, learning can take place outside the classroom as well. While learners are doing their tasks, they need to see the picture from a bigger side of learning a foreign language. Finally, learning process awareness enables learners to monitor their own learning, negotiate on their learning goals, and make them become self-directed and self-assessors as well. As mentioned above, there are differences between learners in the process as dealing with their tasks. If research goes further, learners having different strategies might affect their awareness process thus they are being effective or ineffective in the process. Therefore, metacognitive knowledge of learning guide learners, improve their ways of planning and monitoring their learning process (Kohonen, 2001). They need to apply the most effective or suitable strategies on their learning so that they can become more comprehensible and reflective in the process.

Interaction is another key in the development of autonomy of one person's learning experience. Little (2000) sees social-interaction as the principle of learning activity and individual learning by consolidation of past and future learning. When learners share their experiences with others, this might also help them to become aware of what their strengths and weaknesses are. It is a fact that we are all social beings and as Salomon (1993) mentions;

“in order to be socially-interactive, cognitions must start inside individuals' heads so that a two-way interaction can occur”.

Individual cognition is defined by Baltes and Staudinger (1996:8) as;

“internal transactions with mental representations of other persons (e.g., inner dialogues)...because the origins and emergence of these mental representations of other persons most likely involved at one point some form of person-to-person contact”.

In other words, psychological development refers to the metacognitive development of the learner. The Russian psychologist Vygotsky (1978:86) stresses the importance of social relationships in the development of mental abilities and

learning. He views interaction with peers as an effective way of developing skills and strategies. In his theory 'zone of proximal development' he explains it as;

“The distance between the actual developmental level and as determined by independent problem-solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers”.

He also emphasizes the importance of higher cognitive functions which are internalized from social-interaction. He suggests that teachers should use cooperative learning exercises where less competent children develop with help from more skillful peers - within the zone of proximal development. We can conclude by saying that social interaction is a very effective way for learners to boost their tasks.

Roles in the development of Autonomy: Learners Role and Teachers Role

“Developing learner autonomy is a long, difficult and often painful process, not least for the teacher. It demands constant effort on the part of teacher and learners, not only as individuals but in collaboration with one another...It is an experience-based learning process for teachers and learners alike” (Dam, 1995:6).

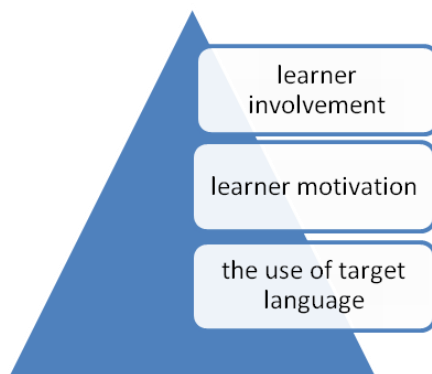
Let me now attempt to look at the concept of learner autonomy in the context of two roles: the learner and the teacher. We know that learner autonomy focuses on learning rather than teaching; therefore, these two roles must be examined more closely. The first thing we should keep in mind is that Little (1997:223) states that being an autonomous learner does not mean being totally free; learners are not completely independent in their learning process. In order not to have misunderstandings, David Little (1990) clarifies what autonomy is not. Autonomy is not limited to learning without teacher, and it does not let learners show what they can do best. Also, autonomy is not a teaching method and it is not something teachers apply to their learners. It is merely a combination of different behaviors rather than one. Little, D. (1990) states;

“Autonomy in language learning is not merely a matter of control over learning activities and resources. It is also a matter of a particular orientation towards language learning, in which ‘for the truly autonomous learner, each occasion of language use is an occasion of language learning, and *vice versa*’”.

However, this might cause confusion among some educators. Learners are not detached from their responsibilities, but they are the ones who take their own responsibility in learning. As aforementioned, learner's active participation and willingness to act independently, being in-cooperation, his reflective involvement in the learning process that is individualizing the learning process are significant factors in gaining autonomy. When learners become more conscious of their learning, they can judge their weaknesses and strengths. In order to develop their autonomy, learners need to develop relationships between what they already know and what they have learned (Barnes, 1976:81).

“I believe that all truly effective learning entails the growth of autonomy in the learner as regards both the process and the content of learning; but I also believe that for most learners the growth of autonomy requires stimulus, insight and guidance of a good teacher” (Little, 2000).

While learner autonomy moves the focus from teaching to learning, the teacher’s role has also changed. Being independent is clarified in terms of learner’s roles, and during the process of autonomy awareness, the teacher does not become totally invisible or their role is ignored. As we know, the traditional teacher is the only person who is in control of the classroom and direct learning. In a traditional way, learning is internal, and it is within the individual. It is also seen to be less time-consuming and effective than group work. However, we know that social-interaction is very crucial in the process of learning. Teachers must not be seen as source tools. They are just facilitators who help learners by providing opportunities for them to practise the language both in and outside the class. The teacher should plan establishing collaboration with learners and try to raise their awareness in this learning process at all times. In other words, they are merely guides or counselors who inform their learners that they are able to choose their own learning strategy and help them become aware of their choices. Voller (1997) sums up the roles of teachers during the promotion of autonomy as ‘a facilitator’, ‘a counselor’ and ‘a resource’. The word “independence” implies different meanings and this term must not be regarded as absence of guidance. Teachers should guide and make their learners work under their guidance if they want their learners to achieve success in their learning. Nunan (2003) emphasizes that teachers must be very careful not to guide the learners implicitly to the strategies they themselves prefer. Therefore, they need careful planning and reconsider the necessary teaching strategies they should use because the teacher’s role is vital in the process of moving students from formal learning to autonomous learning, and implementing learner autonomy in classrooms. According to David Little (2001), the teacher is shaped by three pedagogical principles:



The first principle is learner involvement where the learners are encouraged to be involved fully in planning, monitoring and evaluating their own learning. The second one is learner reflection where the teacher motivates their learners to reflect continuously on the process and content of their learning and helps the learner to engage themselves in self-assessment. Lastly, it is the principle of target language

use. The learner is encouraged to use the target language as the goal of learning. Teachers must create and foster an autonomous learning environment by creating a framework with the learner according to proficiency level, age and goals. Teachers' roles and commitment must not be ignored as they are significant resources aiming self-direction and reflection at developing learner autonomy and the quality of learning.

Every school has a curriculum to be implemented and the teacher and the learner must set their own goals and choose their own learning activities in a realistic framework. The autonomous classroom requires collaborative work between the teacher and the learners as well as with peers. Furthermore, learners must keep a kind of logbook of their own learning where they can keep their written work so that they can interact with their teachers through writing and speaking. All this work is evaluated in their target language by groups of learners or as a whole class, or individually by the teacher. The promotion of autonomy in language learning needs opportunities to enhance students' learning process through the use of individual, group and academic skills such as language learning strategies. The way learners demonstrate these is achieved through the portfolio and portfolio assessment.

Portfolio: The European Language Portfolio and Use of Portfolios

The European Language Portfolio (ELP) and the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEF) were developed consecutively, and since then numerous variations of portfolios have been produced. However, in principle, they share the same basics. The Portfolio:

- belongs to the learner
- gathers documents including experiences and progress
- promotes plurilingualism and multiculturalism
- helps to develop learner autonomy (Lenz, 2004:22).

According to the English Language Portfolio (ELP) (Council of Europe 2006), a portfolio is the student's own property and a tool to promote learner autonomy. It is a tool for learners to reflect their own learning experiences. It has been proven by most researchers to be a useful tool for teachers who want to promote autonomy in their teaching because increasingly learner autonomy has continued to be a major subject of the Council of Europe since it first emerged. The first thing about the portfolio is to look at Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (1996). It was developed to provide 'a common basis for elaboration of language syllabuses, curriculum guidelines, examinations, textbooks, etc. across Europe' (Council of Europe, 2001:1). To understand the framework and action-oriented approach to learning, it is a good idea to refer to the Council of Europe (2001). The important point about this framework was to implement an action-oriented approach, and, as a result, a companion was developed; The European Language Portfolio. It is a piece of this framework to apply the 'I can' statements as an assessment tool since they are the descriptors of CEFR which characterizes the autonomous language learner. 'Language use, embracing language learning comprises the actions performed by persons who as individuals and social agents develop a range of competences' (ibid: 26-27).

The ELP has three components that provide a record of linguistic and cultural skills including communicative skills in proficiency level recognized by CEFR (1996). There are two assumptions underlying ELP; the pedagogical function and reporting function. Reporting function is promoted in these three components; the Language passport, language biography and a dossier (Council of Europe, 2000):

- The Language Passport includes records of formal data about the learning process and reveals language competence and gives a brief progress of the learner's learning experiences.
- The Language Biography is the part that learners plan their learning, reflect and assess their progress and process. Learners keep a record of their language proficiency; reflect on linguistic and cultural experiences in or outside the classroom (Council of Europe, 2000). It also includes self-assessment scales with reference to the CEF).
- The Dossier is the part where the learner has an opportunity to collect documents to show his achievements or experiences from the first two sections (Council of Europe, 2000). It is a Working Dossier accompanied by daily language learning and documents the process of learning (Lenz, 2004:24). It is a formative assessment, which uses self-assessment checklists and sample works that are justified in the biography section (Little, 2005).

The Language Biography is considered to function pedagogically and contains three objectives (Lenz, 2004:28):

- To encourage learners to have more and better language learning
- To motivate learners for more and better language learning
- To help learners to reflect on their language learning and intercultural experiences, plan effectively, and thereby move towards more self-direction, i.e. to become more autonomous learners.

Learner autonomy gives learners the opportunity to choose and use their creativity. In other words, learner autonomy makes teacher-centered learning to learner-centered which learners move from being passive to active ones. This enables learners to work on different tasks and record their works into their logbooks. This can happen through the portfolio, which have become a crucial tool in the process of language learning. It is admitted by many researchers that there is a significant relationship between learner autonomy and the portfolio. One major objective of the portfolio is to promote learner autonomy, as well as help develop learning skills with the guidance of a teacher who provides the necessary tools for the learners. Moreover, learners learn to document their process and progress acquired in different environments. To discuss what a portfolio is and what is not, I can say that a portfolio provides a comprehensive picture of a student's accomplishments which cannot be assessed in a traditional way. It is also a great display where students can demonstrate what they know and do. They are collections of their work selected by themselves which represent the process and experience of their learning. The portfolio includes a selection of samples of their language use gathered in a folder to be shown as a proof for their parents, peers or others. To avoid any misunderstandings, the content of the portfolio must be clarified. The portfolio is not

a collection of materials gathered in a folder, but they must be authentic, created, collected and organized by the learners in a way that they must show the learners' language competencies.

To summarize, according to Little (2009:226); the ELP promotes autonomy in classroom in three ways:

- Checklists are obligatory in the official curriculum and learners and their teachers are provided with an inventory of learning tasks that they can use to plan, monitor and evaluate learning over a school year or term or a month or even just a month.
- The language biography is designed to bring together goal setting and self-assessment with reflection on learning styles, learning and communication strategies, and the cultural dimension of target language learning and use.
- It can help to promote the target language as medium of learning and reflection.

Portfolio Assessment and Benefits

“The students achieve ownership of their learning. The teacher no longer knows all the answers, meaning that communication in the FL classroom becomes authentic and the language becomes the means, as well as the goal” (Lacey, 2007:5).

In contrast to traditional assessment, authentic assessment offers a great deal of support for self-directed language learning. Authentic assessment evaluates learner performance using tasks and activities that reflects the classroom goals and the curriculum realistically. According to Gardner (2000:50),

“Assessments may serve one or more of a number of purposes, such as confidence building, demonstrating learner gain, or motivation, and they may be constructed in a number of ways, for example, by the teacher, by the learner, collaboratively or as a portfolio...”.

One example of authentic assessment is portfolio assessment. Portfolio assessment is a systematic and long term collection of student work done by specific, known objectives and evaluated in accordance with the same criteria. Both the individual works and the portfolio as a whole are assessed against specified criteria, which match the specified objectives in the beginning of the term. As I mentioned above, it is the student's responsibility to create his or her own portfolio, with teacher guidance and support. One other thing is the involvement of peers and parents. As a result, the portfolio is assessed by the audience; teachers, peers and parents. There is a collection of student's work from different sources which proves the validity of the portfolios.

It is known that there are different uses and models of portfolio assessment for specific purposes. Every institution adapts it according to its own set objectives. The most important thing is to make good selections and choices as well as make reflections during the process of learning (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000). In recent years, teachers have started to integrate portfolios into their curriculum as a part of

long term assessment with administrative support. It cannot be denied that there are concerns focusing on reliability, validity, process, evaluation and time. However, it has been proved in many international and national schools that this is not different from other assessment types. It is known that there is not one universal assessment type that is applicable in all skills, which is less time-consuming to administer and grade, also valid and reliable in language teaching.

As mentioned multiple times, the portfolio is a form of authentic assessment that measures a student's progress over a period of time in different skills. English teachers and other foreign language teachers should be able to choose or design their own assessment styles which best meet the needs of a variety of students learning styles. The portfolio can provide structure for involving students in developing and understanding criteria for good efforts, in understanding criteria as their own, and in applying the criteria to their own and other students' work. Language teachers could design their own portfolios regarding their own institutional goals. As they are not just a collection of materials stuffed in a dossier, they should include activities, process of as development including the four skills in language learning showing the learners' use of language. The portfolio is an evidence of the work done by students in specific skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking, and at one time can include their interpersonal, interpretive and presentational skills. Portfolios can sometimes include just one skill such as reading or writing portfolios. They can include vocabulary logs, listening logs, writing journals, emails, poems, short stories, songs. Portfolios should include self-assessment, self-reflection, peer-assessment and feedback from the teacher. They show student's language performance and progress over time.

The educational benefits of portfolio assessment are obvious in language learning. First of all, it measures what you have taught in class. Second, it brings to light any weaknesses during instructional practices. In other words, it provides systematic validity throughout the ongoing assessment. In the language learning process, assessment cannot be external; therefore, the portfolio is a true learning experience where time is not lost separately on assessment separately. On the other hand, students see assessment as something done to check what they have done in class by a third party. Students know a little about the evaluation of their class work. For these reasons, portfolio assessment enables students to become involved in developing and understanding criteria and applying it to their own and peer's work. Portfolios are far beyond getting good grades. They promote positive student involvement since students themselves actively involved in the process of creation which makes them reflect on their own learning. Increasingly, metacognitive skills help students build self-confidence, foster learning strategies and make use of them. It also helps students gain the ability of assessing and revising their own work and revising it. It gives students an opportunity to strengthen their deficient areas. In this way, the student continues studying and becomes more successful in language learning that fosters motivation. Moreover, the teacher gives feedback through the logbooks or dossiers as parts of the portfolio which serve as a communicative and reflective tool. The student tends to improve in the learning process because the student can keep a track and control of his learning through classroom interaction. They are expected to use the target language not only for communication, but also a

means of reflection and learning (Little, Ridley, & Ushioda, 2003). Reflection enhances self-assessment which is crucial for learners to reflect periodically on what happened during classroom activities. As part of reflection the below are the advantages:

- learners get the opportunity to acquire the language in their own writing instead of filling gaps in traditional tests,
- lower level students can have more time to become comfortable with newly introduced topics,
- class time is not wasted giving tests, there is more production,
- learners have chance to apply what they have learned in class in an authentic way,
- learners develop independence and they take more responsibility for their own learning. They do not have to wait for the teacher to correct their mistakes,
- teachers can work with learners both individually and in small groups where there is more social interaction,
- encourages positivism and triggers motivation,
- provides high quality teaching and learning environment.

It is undeniable that there are numerous benefits of the portfolio use if learner autonomy is encouraged in foreign language classrooms; there is not a better way to do it. However, these benefits can vary due to the implementation and adaptation of the portfolio. In the next section, there are three examples of portfolio use which I have experienced in different respectable institutions.

Examples: Three adaptations of the portfolio

As I discussed the definition of the term portfolio and tried to give some theoretical background information, it must be admitted that the idea behind the concept and the use of it in language classrooms may not mean or imply real concept since there are a lot of different adaptations of it in different institutions under different purposes. It is for sure that without a purpose, a portfolio would not go further than being a folder in which a student does his or her work and puts them in a folder and keeps it till the end of the school term. It would not go beyond than a collection of work. In this section, I would try to give three examples of the use of portfolio in English language learning classes that I have experienced.

To start with, I would like to give a brief background of the pedagogical approach of the institution that I have met this version of the use of the portfolio in a language learning class. The institution is an English-medium one and the portfolio was used at Prep School. Teachers were expected to create teacher-centered classrooms to promote autonomous learning. Therefore, it was agreed on the use of the portfolio. The portfolio was not a version of the ELP but merely a writing portfolio in which students' works and progress were collected and evaluated. Teachers helped students to improve their writing skills regarding the existing curriculum because they were not completely autonomous in all skills. Students were required to work on their tasks in class and outside class. The first step was writing drafts in class, the teacher checked the drafts and returned them to the students not

only with written feedback, but also provided verbal feedback individually and in small groups. The second level was the students were asked to rewrite their work. After completing their work, self-assessment and peer-assessment, which were negotiated and prepared by the teachers of the institution, were applied in class. In this process, there are undeniable positive consequences for the development of their writing skill and their social skills as well. Learners worked with different peers, learned from each other, gained self-efficacy in writing, self-judgment and learned to respect each other's feedback. Students were keeping every document in their folders, and in the end of the term, they were asked to choose two best of their work to be assessed. The portfolio also was a proof of their learning experience and success rather than a showcase. Although they were inexperienced in learning in the beginning of the term, they attained awareness and autonomy in writing skill and reflected their experiences on other skills. This was almost more than ten years ago, and I think the success was pretty significant.

Next example of the portfolio is from another institution which is also English-medium. The first time it was done, the European Language Portfolio was taken into consideration as a reference. The portfolio was negotiated and the sections and checklists were prepared by a group of teachers. On the first week of the term, a language strategy and style inventory was given to the students, and this was the start of learner training. The portfolio was introduced to the students and the training took at least a week. As a healthy start, an orientation on learner awareness and autonomy was done, and the portfolio system was introduced. Briefly, the portfolio included the language biography where the focus was on students' previous language learning and experiences. In addition, this part included the current language learning styles, aims and the checklists for self-assessment ('can do' statements) which is a requirement of CEFR. This was actually the most important part of the portfolio regarding learner autonomy. The students returned the checklists once a week or sometimes twice a week and individual and group work were reviewed. Interactive reflection was one of the goals to be accomplished. The portfolio included four skills with various tasks such as listening logs, reading logs and reviews, story writing, poster presentations, process writing, etc. the portfolios were also recorded documents of authentic target language examples and pieces that were chosen by the learners themselves to be evaluated. The portfolio worked with low or zero beginners as well though the process established in a slower way. The checklists helped students to see themselves as autonomous users of English language whose performance were measured internationally. As for me, this portfolio fostered the learners' cooperation skills, creativity and productivity. They learned how to adapt themselves to new conditions during their learning. Assessment was an ongoing one. I believe this portfolio accomplished the aim although there was time constraint. The portfolio helped the learners to see themselves autonomous in their learning. At the end of the term, there were two visitors from the UK who are well-known educators; Terry Lamb and Barbara Sinclair, and both the portfolio and the process were humbly appreciated and received positive feedback. So, in the end both students and teachers developed autonomy.

Finally, I would like to have a few words on another example that I have experienced in another institution. In the beginning of the semester, the students

were dragged into a process where they had no training, no awareness raising and of course no autonomy. The portfolio as named portfolio, the content and the implementation did not match with the ELP. Students were expected to write a piece every two weeks with having no clue on brainstorming and outline because teachers were told not to do so since they were assumed insignificant in the writing process. The portfolio was the name of the writing quiz and the pieces were not even kept in a folder. So, the implementation was not beyond formal evaluation. The classes did not have the assessment at the same time or day; therefore; the students got the topics from each other and started working on them at home. They came to class and copied their work on to the formal assessment paper. After feedback where there was neither complete interaction individually nor in small groups; they wrote their second drafts that were evaluated according to a very simple mechanic checklist. The papers were graded and given back to students and one copy of their work was given to the testing as a proof of what they had done in the portfolio time. As can be seen, the process was not merely student production. The progress and outcome were vitally poor. Students could not gain any awareness of what they were doing and why they were doing portfolio writing. Unfortunately, this example was no more than a disappointment regarding the learning process and learning outcomes of learning a language. I believe learner autonomy was totally ignored because the pedagogical approach was not clearly set by the administrators of the respected institution.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Today, autonomy is interpreted in different ways in the context of language learning. As mentioned above, the portfolio is the motivation for learners to develop and use their capacity to become autonomous, and to verify their progress in learning. Portfolio and portfolio assessment are not just measuring tools to assess learner autonomy but a motivational tool that triggers learning and help to develop autonomy. Thanks to the internet, there are numerous useful organizations, websites and forums related to this field. Undoubtedly, teachers have a clearer and more detailed understanding of autonomy to provide choices for their learners in all subject studies. These sites can provide useful information and strategies for language teachers who have never heard or used the portfolio in their curriculum. Because learner autonomy is getting far beyond than ever before, further scrutiny into this topic is required. In addition, the literature and previous studies have shown that the portfolio must be an integral part of any curriculum if autonomous classrooms are expected. My humble suggestion is that the conditions under which the portfolio is applied must be evaluated prior to its use, which is necessary in terms of its reliability and validity, and thus its effectiveness in terms of fostering autonomy, and lastly the teachers to consider their own professional growth.

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Portföy Kullanımı ile Öğrenen Özerkliğinin Teşviki

Özet

Bu makale, öğrencinin öğrenimini geliştirebilecek unsurları içinde barındıran ve bir öğrenim aracı olan portföy sisteminin öğrenci özerkliğini teşvik etmekte kullanıldığını dil eğitimcilerine hatırlatmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma dil öğreniminde özerklik ve portföy arasındaki ilişkiyi ortaya koymaktadır. Başlangıçta, öğrenen özerkliği mefhumunun literatürde var olan tanımları verilmiş ve özerklik için gereken unsurlar belirtilmiştir. Devamında ise portföy sisteminin teorik ve pratik örnekleri sunulmuştur. Portföy sistemi ve değerlendirmesinin faydalarını ve öğrenen özerkliği ile arasındaki ilişkisinin yanısıra portföy sisteminin öğrenen özerkliğini geliştirecek unsurları içinde barındırdığını göz önüne sermektedir. Bu makalenin, portföy kullanımı yoluyla öğrenen özerkliğini teşvik etmeyi hedefleyen öğretmenlerimize katkıda bulunması düşünülmektedir. Ayrıca kendi kurumlarında yabancı dil öğreniminde öğrenen özerkliğini teşvik etmek amacıyla öğretim programlarının gözden geçirilmesini umuyorum.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Özerklik, öğrenen özerkliği, portföy, portföy ölçme ve değerlendirme sistemi.