



The Effect of Portfolio-Keeping on EFL Young Learners’

Writing Achievement and Their Motivation Towards Writing¹

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Abstract

The common view that writing skill in a foreign language is difficult to acquire may lead to loss of motivation and, therefore, lack of success among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners. Portfolio application as an alternative method in foreign language teaching may alleviate such a problem and appear as an effective means to increase students’ motivation and success levels in EFL writing classes. Its application, therefore, needs to be disseminated in teaching English in the Turkish context. With such a purpose, this study aims to investigate the effect of portfolio-keeping on young learner's writing motivation and also writing achievement in teaching English as a foreign language to young learners in a public middle school in the Denizli province during the 2018-2019 academic year with 30 7th grade students. The present study represents a quasi-experimental research design as a four-month portfolio application was carried out with 15 experimental group participants while the control group of the same size did not receive a specific treatment. The quantitative data obtained through a writing motivation survey and pre- and post-writing tasks in the study were supported by qualitative data through interviews held with the participants in the experimental group. The questionnaires and pre- and post-tasks were analyzed through the SPSS 22.0 statistical package and the interviews through content analysis. The quantitative data of the study indicate that portfolio-keeping can be used to increase young learners’ both writing motivation and achievement in English language teaching. The quantitative data also suggest that portfolio application can improve students’ writing sub-skills such as focus, elaboration, organization, conventions and vocabulary while the portfolio-keeping has improved students' focus and elaboration sub-skills the most and convention sub-skill the least. On the other hand, qualitative data collected from the interviews showed that the participants held positive attitudes towards portfolio application and also they developed their research skills, increased success in exams, and improved the use of sentence structure, vocabulary, spelling, and conjunctions. However, some participants reported finding appropriate vocabulary and organizing paragraphs as problems related to portfolio-keeping tasks.

Keywords: writing skill, portfolio, motivation, writing achievement

¹ The researchers hereby declare that the data was obtained before 2019. With regard to the issued statements on compliance with ethical international standards, they officially state that they did not use any unlawful method or material during the research. The researchers initiated the research after permissions (i. e. voluntary and individual written consents) and submitted them before publication.

Introduction

Among four language skills, writing is considered the most challenging one for all language learners, whether the language is a first, second, or a foreign language (Nunan, 2000). The reason underlying this idea may become its outstanding role in stimulating thinking, concentrating, and organizing their ideas (Rao, 2007). It has been also specified that difficulties in language and learners' attitudes towards their writing tasks may create important problems which affect learners' success level (Ismail, Hussin, & Darus, 2012). Hence, motivation, a multi-dimensional psychological issue being one of the most important variables in successful language learning, has always been difficult to achieve in language classes, especially in teaching the writing skill. The use of portfolio as one of the alternative assessment tools (Flood & Lapp, 1989) can increase learner motivation and facilitate learners' progress in language learning (Coombe & Barlow, 2004; Redfern, Norman, Calman, Watson, & Murrells, 2002), since using portfolios ensures student-centered environment in the classroom, gives students the opportunity to take responsibility of their own learning, and thus helps learners to become more autonomous in language learning. It is, therefore, important to lead EFL teachers to the use of portfolios in their classes because teachers can explore skills and competences of their students and also recognize their preferences, manners, tendencies, and learning strategies (Nunes, 2004) by implementing portfolios in EFL classrooms. In addition, portfolios enable teachers to provide feedback on their students' progress regularly as they provide authentic information about their students' progress. Considering all these advantages of portfolio use and negative attitudes of learners towards writing skill, conducting a portfolio research with young learners on writing seems necessary, and the present study is designed to be an example of portfolio application in a state school context in Turkey. In the related literature, there is limited research on the effect of portfolio-keeping on writing motivation and achievement of young learners in Turkey. Thus, this study tries to answer whether portfolio-keeping affects writing motivation, overall writing achievement as well as the writing sub-skills of young learners in a Turkish EFL context.

Literature Review

Writing in a second language is a challenging task for the majority of EFL learners (Boscolo & Hidi, 2007), since it is “an extremely complex, cognitive activity for all which the writer is required to demonstrate control of a number of variables simultaneously” (Nunan, 1989, p.36) such as motivation (Bacha, 2002). There are also instructional factors affecting the writing development of learners such as crowded classes (Bourke, 1986) as EFL teachers may find it difficult to help students individually and apply different teaching strategies in such classrooms (Roettger, Roettger, & Walugembe, 2007), or teachers cannot allocate enough time for assessing writing tasks and giving feedback (Ferris, 2003; Lee, 2007; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998) in crowded classes.

An important factor affecting the success of language teaching is the motivation level of learners in language classes. With regard to foreign language learning, motivation incorporates attitudes and emotional circumstances influencing desire to learn and amount of endeavor (Ellis, 1997). According to Keller and Suzuki (2004), to keep students stay motivated in the classroom, attention, relevance, confidence, and satisfaction elements are fundamental. At this point, portfolios may become a concrete step to increasing student motivation outside the classroom for writing skill. Therefore, regarding student motivation in L2 writing, keeping portfolios in writing classes is favored due to a number of advantages such an application offers; namely, keeping portfolios in writing classes can enhance learners' motivation as they are involved in tasks more actively; learners do not feel anxious as they write freely without the pressure of keeping up with traditional schedules of classes; learners participate in the activities enthusiastically with collaborative studying skills; and also the students' creativity can be increased with various

writing tasks (Chan, 2001; Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991). Dörnyei (1998) also emphasizes that motivation and learner autonomy nurture each other. As a portfolio can be defined as “a purposeful collection of student work that exhibits the students’ efforts, progress, and achievements” (Paulson et al., 1991, p. 60), portfolio-keeping may increase learner autonomy with enriched tasks and outside classroom activities as students take over responsibility for their own learning, become independent learners, and learn how to work collaboratively through peer critiques. Accordingly, autonomous learners being curious and determined have high motivation and take responsibility for their own learning, monitor their own progress, and set goals for themselves (Hancock, 1994; Murphy & Camp, 1996; Song & August, 2002).

Portfolios can include anything that reflects a student’s strengths and growth such as self-assessments, teacher observations, meta cognitive interviews, samples of writing as well as samples of the student’s best work (Coombe & Barlow, 2004), classroom tests, work in cooperative group projects (Cohen, 1990), and student work such as essays, letters, projects, journal pages and entries or reflections (Erdoğan & Yurdabakan, 2011). Richards and Renandya (2002) state that a portfolio may include students’ all written products to reflect their overall performance or students’ work throughout the term, which gives information about the progress of students to both the teacher and students and also makes such tasks more meaningful for students. Portfolio assessment does not only focus on products but also on the process of writing. It is also claimed that students are assessed on their ceaseless performance throughout the portfolio process and they are able to utilize higher level thinking and problem-solving skills. In addition, portfolios implemented with process writing can engage learners’ pre-writing, editing, and revising. Pre-writing stage can help learners localize attentional resources between what to say and how to say it (Hayes, 1996), and the planning strategies allow learners to explore and utter their own ideas. Keeping a portfolio also contributes to paragraph organization and pre-writing strategies such as brainstorming, clustering, and outlining (Aydin, 2010).

Portfolio use has, therefore, been the concern of many research studies for the past three decades. Considering the advantages of portfolios, many researchers have investigated whether portfolios can motivate students to write in English and also increase their success level in English. In a study, Huang (2012) investigated portfolio use in an integrated English course in China and claimed that portfolio implementation affected a number of variables positively; namely, promoting students’ learning motivation, creating collaborative learning environment, developing positive attitude toward the use of portfolio assessment, improving students’ language competence, developing cross-cultural knowledge, and enhancing learning autonomy and motivation. All these benefits of portfolios have also been supported by a number of other researchers. Jafarpour, Mohammadi and Vangah (2016) investigated the impact of portfolio assessment on Iranian EFL learners’ L2 writing proficiency and stated that the experimental group that received portfolio assessment outperformed the control group which was assessed with traditional methods in writing classes in the post-writing test although they were more or less equal before the portfolio implementation. Similarly, Tabatabaei and Assefi (2012) explored the effect of portfolio assessment on the writing performance EFL learners in an English language institute with upper intermediate levels of Iranian EFL learners and showed that the participants in the experimental group which received portfolio assessment were more successful in writing performance compared to that of the control group participants. In another study, Nezakatgoo (2010) investigated the effect of portfolio assessment on the final examination scores of Iranian EFL students’ writing skill in a freshman English composition course and stated that the portfolio group students improved their writing skill and got higher scores on the final examination. In another study conducted by Qinghua (2010) as to whether portfolio-based writing assessment (PBWA) would improve Chinese EFL university students’ writing skill in terms of accuracy, complexity, fluency, and coherence showed that PBWA developed EFL writing ability especially with regard to accuracy and coherence. Ghoorchaei, Tavakoli and

Ansari (2010) also examined the effect of portfolio assessment on Iranian EFL students' English writing skill and the study results indicated that portfolio group participants outperformed the control group participants in their overall writing ability in terms of focus, elaboration, organization, and vocabulary. In another study, Farahian and Avarzamani (2018) aimed at finding out the role of portfolios in EFL writers' meta-cognition and their writing skills in a university context in Iran and reported that the portfolio writing group outperformed the control group in terms of meta-cognition and writing proficiency of EFL learners. Moreover, the experimental group students had a positive attitude towards formative assessment and teacher/peer feedback. In another study, Arslan (2014) looked into the effect of blogging and portfolio-keeping on a group of pre-service teachers' writing skill in the Turkish context, and the results of the study yielded blogs and portfolios can be influential tools to combine feedback practice into writing process and also the process of blogging and portfolio-keeping improved the writing skills of the students in terms of process, organization, content, language use, vocabulary, mechanics, and accuracy. Ok (2014) also investigated the opinions of freshmen learners at an English language teaching department in Turkey on the portfolio process in the Advanced Reading-Writing Course regarding their progress in language and vocabulary use and proposed that portfolio-keeping increased the self-confidence of the students in writing and speaking skills, and also portfolio-keeping helped to create a positive attitude towards writing in the target language. In another study, Goctu (2016) examined the perspectives of preparatory school students on portfolio assessment of EFL writing at tertiary level in Georgia, and the results of the study revealed that portfolio assessment was rewarding for students as they developed their problem-solving skills and took their own responsibility for learning. In another study, Erden-Burnaz (2011) investigated the perceptions of EFL learners towards the benefits and the challenges of keeping a portfolio with intermediate level students at a tertiary level foreign languages program in Turkey, and the study results revealed that perceptions of students towards portfolio assessment were positive before and after the implementation. Most of the students preferred portfolio implementation to traditional assessment, and the participants specified that they became more autonomous by means of portfolio application. In another study, Ozturk and Cecen (2007) looked into the effect of portfolio-keeping on the writing anxiety of students in a preparatory class of English Language Teaching Department of a foundation university in Turkey, and the study showed that portfolio-keeping was rewarding for overcoming writing anxiety. Similarly, Aydin (2010) investigated the problems encountered and contributions of portfolios to the writing skill of 39 EFL pre-service teachers at a Turkish university and revealed that portfolio application increased writing motivation and contributed to the writing skills of pre-service teachers in terms of characteristics, organization, and development of paragraphs and essays, mechanics such as punctuation and capitalization, and giving and receiving feedback to written work; however, very few participants reported portfolio-keeping as boring and tiring, portfolio-keeping taking too much time, and also portfolio-keeping preventing creative writing. Saavedra and Campos (2018) conducted a mixed-methods study comparing the writing performance of 60 EFL students in three separate groups during their first semester of an English undergraduate program at a university in Chile; coding, brief grammatical explanation, and underlining were used in order to give feedback. The researchers used multiple-drafting in a writing-portfolio-based class that allowed them to see their progress over time, and the results of the study revealed that learners' accuracy improved significantly, the participants appreciated the constant feedback, and they had a positive attitude towards multiple drafting and the writing process approach.

Portfolio studies with young learners, though limited, have also shown positive views about the benefits of portfolio use. Koyuncu (2006) conducted a study with sixth grade students at a private school in the Turkish context in order to examine the effect of the European Language Portfolio (ELP) on learner autonomy. First, the researcher investigated the effect of traditional assessment tools on learner autonomy and concluded that such an assessment was not sufficient

in developing learner autonomy. Then, the researcher investigated the effect of ELP on learner autonomy and found that ELP assisted the participants to become autonomous. Taki and Heidari (2011) also conducted a study in order to see the effectiveness of portfolio-based writing in EFL with pre-intermediate young learners studying English in a language center in Iran. The results of the study revealed that portfolio-based writing affected language learning and writing ability of the learners positively, and also the students developed a positive attitude toward portfolio assessment. Similarly, Demirel and Duman (2015) investigated the effect of portfolio use on student achievement and motivation with eighth grade students in a state school in Turkey. The study results revealed that portfolio-keeping increased students' motivation and had a positive effect on student achievement while the application affected writing, listening, and reading skills most with no effect on speaking skill. Considering the advantages of portfolio-keeping in EFL contexts based upon limited research in the field, this research study attempts to investigate the effect of portfolio use on EFL young learners' writing motivation and success level in a Turkish context.

Methodology

Research Design

The study is based on quasi-experimental design as it aimed to show whether there would be any differences in the participants' L2 writing achievement and their motivation towards L2 writing by comparing the experimental group and the control group after the portfolio-keeping process ended. To achieve this, an embedded research design as mixed methods research was employed with an aim to gain perspectives from different types of data or from different levels within the study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Data sources involved quantitative pre-post surveys and pre-post writing tasks and interviews with students as a qualitative method.

Sampling

The present study was carried out with 30 7th grade students at a state middle school in the province of Denizli, Turkey in 2018-2019 academic year upon receiving an official permission from the Local Ministry Directorate. Through convenience sampling where "the researcher selects participants because they are willing and available to be studied" (Creswell, 2012, p.145), one of the 7th grade classes in the school was selected as the control group while another class was selected as the experimental group due to their availability to the second researcher, the English teacher of these two classes, since she would have a chance to observe the developments closely and follow the phases of the study regularly. However, these two groups were assigned as experimental and control groups randomly. The number of participants in each group was considered enough because "as a rough estimate, an educational researcher needs approximately 15 participants in each group in an experiment" (Creswell, 2012, p.150). Both of the classes were of similar characteristics: each group in the study consisted of 15 students whose ages varied from 11 to 13 and whose English proficiency level was considered as A1 and A2; both groups had six hours of English lessons, but they had never experienced portfolio implementation before; and both groups received the same English education with the same teaching methods, the same materials, and the same teacher. The only difference between the two groups was the portfolio implementation.

The participants in the experimental group were required to keep portfolios in which they had to keep their writing assignments and the assigned tasks. Paper-based portfolios were preferred due to the participants' socioeconomic levels and ages as most of them did not have computers at home. The experimental group had a 16-week portfolio implementation in their writing classes, whereas the control group only followed the regular curriculum throughout these 16 weeks.

The writing topics were chosen from the students' course-book so that students could have ideas and information about the portfolio tasks. Both groups had writing tasks for 16 weeks but the experimental group kept their written works in their portfolios and they wrote second drafts according to feedback given by their teacher. On the other hand, the control group received feedback and continued writing on the same topics in parallel with the experimental group. The writing results of the experimental and control groups were assessed based on the same rubric. This part was the quantitative part of the study. In order to ensure the validity of quantitative results, the researcher had interviews with the participants in the experimental group in order to find out the opinions of the participants on the portfolio-keeping process.

Instruments

In order to reveal the effect of portfolio use on participants' motivation towards L2 writing and their writing achievement in secondary level EFL classes, various writing tasks, a questionnaire on writing motivation, semi-structured interviews, and a writing rubric handling focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary were used.

At the very beginning of the study, L2 writing motivation level of the experimental and control group students was measured by Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire (AWMQ) adapted from Payne (2012). The questionnaire consisted of 35 five-point Likert scale items in total with the assessment scores ranging from 1=Strongly disagree, to 5=Strongly Agree and measured the following factors: intrinsic motivation (enjoyment), extrinsic motivation (recognition), and self-efficacy. The researchers did back-translation of the original survey as it was first translated into Turkish in order to prevent any misunderstanding about the items. Since the target group was young learners, only the word "university" was changed into "primary". Then, the researchers got the opinions of two academicians and one English lecturer to ensure the validity of the items in the questionnaire. Content validity of the questionnaire was enhanced by removing the ambiguous items for young learners. As the items measured the same points as the original one, the validity of the questionnaire was expected to remain the same.

Then a pilot study was conducted with twenty 8th grade students in the same context before the questionnaire was administered to the experimental and control groups in order to remove ambiguous items for the participants. The pilot study showed that only two items needed to be clarified. After the pilot study, the overall reliability of the adapted questionnaire was found to be 0.89 Cronbach's Alfa. Moreover, Cronbach's Alpha was 0.79 for *intrinsic motivation (enjoyment)* section; 0.69 for *extrinsic motivation (recognition)* section; and 0.79 for *self-efficacy* section of the questionnaire.

The writing tasks were prepared by the researchers by taking curriculum and students' level and ages into consideration. All the tasks were assessed through Writing Scoring Rubric, which was modified from Wang and Liao (2008). In the rubric, there were five criteria; *focus, elaboration, organization, conventions* and *vocabulary*, and the assessment scores changed from 1=very poor to 5=very good. Pre- and post-writing tasks were evaluated weekly and analyzed with SPSS 22.0 statistical program at the end of the study. Lastly, the first and last writing task results of the students were compared in order to see the effect of portfolio-keeping.

At the end of the study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants in the experimental group to get their opinions regarding portfolio-keeping process as open-ended items were expected to provide participants with more options for responding (Creswell, 2012).

Data Collection Procedures

In the fall term of 2018-2019 academic year, the researchers distributed Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire to all the participants to gather their opinions about writing skill before the portfolio-keeping process started. The portfolio assessment model used with the experimental group of learners in this study was based on the 'classroom portfolio model' and consisted of three procedures: collection, selection, and reflection, as suggested by Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000). Table 1 shows the procedure for portfolio application with the experimental group participants.

Table 1. Procedure for the Experimental Group

Students	Teacher
1. Write up first draft	Repeat procedures
2. Submit first draft to the teacher	for all writing tasks
3. Get teacher's comments	1. Reflects upon all final drafts
4. Revise first draft	2. Grades final drafts
5. Write up final draft	
6. Have conference with the teacher	
7. Do self-assessment	
8. Write up the final draft	
9. Collect final draft in portfolio	

The implementation of portfolio-keeping with the experimental group started on 26th November 2018 after the application of pre-study questionnaire and was completed on 15th March 2019 before the post-study questionnaire was applied as can be seen in Table 2. For each task, the teacher, the second researcher, went through the following stages: she first taught students how to do the task; the students wrote a composition related to the task as a pre-task; she gave feedback to students' written work and the students wrote a second draft; the students got feedback on the second draft and put it into portfolios; some worksheets and handouts were distributed by the teacher, and the students completed them and put them into their portfolios; the students wrote a new composition related to the task as post-task and got feedback about it; and the students wrote a second draft and put the final product into their portfolios.

Table 2. Steps of the Research Process for the Experimental Group

Step	Date	Procedure
1	19 th November, 2018	Application of pre-study questionnaire
2	23 rd November, 2018	Introducing portfolio-keeping
3	26 th to 30 th 2018 November	Task 1: Writing an autobiography
4	3 rd to 14 th December, 2018	Task 2: Describing animals
5	17 th to 28 th December, 2018	Task 3: Writing biographies
6	2 nd to 11 th January, 2019	Task 4: Writing about past experiences
7	14 th to 31 st January, 2019	Task 5: Writing about interests and hobbies
8	4 th to 15 th February, 2019	Task 6: Describing people and best friend
9	18 th to 28 th February, 2019	Task 7: Writing invitation cards
10	4 th to 15 th March, 2019	Task 8: Writing about future predictions
11	18 th March 2019	Application of post-study questionnaire
12	25 th March 2019	Interviews with experimental group participants

The study with the control group started with the application of pre-study writing motivation questionnaire on 19th November, 2018 and ended with the application of post-study writing motivation questionnaire on 18th March 2019. Table 3 presents the procedure applied with the control group students.

Table 3. Steps of the Research Process for the Control Group

STEP	DATE	PROCEDURE
1	19 th November, 2018	Application of pre-study questionnaire
2	3 rd to 14 th December, 2018	Task 1: Describing animals
3	17 th to 28 th December, 2018	Task 2: Writing biographies
4	2 nd to 11 th January, 2019	Task 3: Writing about past experiences
5	14 th to 31 st January, 2019	Task 4: Writing about interests and hobbies
6	4 th to 15 th February, 2019	Task 5: Describing people and best friend
7	18 th to 28 th February, 2019	Task 6: Writing invitation cards
8	4 th to 15 th March, 2019	Task 7: Writing about future predictions
9	18 th March 2019	Application of post-study questionnaire

Participants in both the experimental and control groups were exposed to the same L2 writing practices based on the same curriculum. The participants in the control group also completed writing tasks based on the syllabus and received feedback from their teacher. However, unlike the participants in the experimental group, the participants in the control group did not keep portfolios or did not write second drafts during the study, so they did not have the opportunity to track their progress in writing classes.

Data Analysis

In the present study, both quantitative and qualitative data collection instruments were used. Quantitative data collected through pre-application questionnaire and post-application questionnaire were analyzed through the SPSS 22.0 statistical program. Apart from the questionnaires, pre- and post-writing tasks of both control and experimental groups were graded by the researchers and an English language instructor using Writing Scoring Rubric modified from Wang and Liao (2008). The results of the pre- and post-tasks were also evaluated by SPSS 22.0 statistical program by looking at the weekly development of the participants and pre-post writing task differences. Writing tasks were evaluated in terms of five criteria: focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary. The researchers and an English language instructor examined each criterion separately. In order to decide whether the data were parametric or non-parametric, normality test was applied. The distribution of data was decided based on the Shapiro-Wilk test as the number of the participants was below 30. The results of the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated that the data were parametric ($p>0.05$). As the study had two groups, paired sampled T-test was applied to compare motivation levels of the groups before and after the study.

As the last step, interviews conducted with the participants in the experimental group to gather qualitative data for the present study were transcribed and then analyzed thematically through pattern-coding process (Miles & Huberman, 1994) to determine the recurring themes. Finally, the statements were coded and similar codes were grouped, whereas nonrecurring codes were omitted. In order to ensure the reliability of the analysis, an English instructor also analyzed a quarter of the data as supported by Creswell and Plano Clark (2007). No major differences were observed and an agreement was reached on the recurrent themes in our analyses.

Results of the Study

Pre-Study and Post-Study Results of Writing Motivation

According to the results of Paired Samples T-test analysis conducted to see the pre- and post-study writing motivation level of experimental group (portfolio group) (see Table 4), there was not a statistically significant difference between the pre-study and post-study mean values of the participants' writing motivation level ($T = -2.12$; $p = 0.42$, $p > 0.05$). However, at the end of the sixteen-week portfolio-keeping process, the mean value of the participants' writing motivation level increased from 3.00 to 3.47. Therefore, it can be concluded that the writing motivation level of the experimental group was positively affected by portfolio application to a certain extent.

Table 4. Comparison of the Pre-Study and Post-Study Results: Writing Motivation Scores of the Experimental Group (Portfolio Group)

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	P
Writing	Pre	15	3.00	0.52	-2.12	0.42
Motivation	Post	15	3.47	0.68		

In addition, Table 5 demonstrates that there was not a statistically significant difference between the pre-study and post-study mean values of the control group with regard to their writing motivation level ($T = 0.08$; $p = 0.93$, $p > 0.05$). It meant that the motivation level of the control group was almost the same at the beginning and at the end of the study.

Table 5. Comparison of the Pre-Study and Post-Study Results: Writing Motivation Scores of the Control Group

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	P
Writing	Pre	15	3.24	.76	0.08	0.93
Motivation	Post	15	3.22	.91		

Pre-Post Study Results of Writing Tasks

Table 6 demonstrates the results of T-test regarding the first and final writing tasks of the control group. There were statistically no significant differences between the first and final writing task values of the control group with regard to writing achievement ($T = -.89$; $p = .37$, $p > 0.05$). It meant writing achievement of the control group was almost the same at the beginning and at the end of the study.

Table 6. Comparison of the First Writing Task and Final Writing Task Results: Writing Achievement Scores of the Control Group

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	P
Writing	Pre-Writing Task	15	2.02	.85	-.89	.37
Achievement	Post-Writing Task	15	2.37	1.22		

To demonstrate the differences of sub-skills between the first writing task and the final writing task, the participants' writing achievement was examined in terms of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary. According to the results of Paired Samples T-test analysis

(see Table 7), there was a statistically significant difference between the mean values of participants' first writing tasks and final writing tasks with regard to writing achievement ($T = -4.65$; $p = .00$, $p < 0.05$). At the end of the sixteen-week portfolio-keeping process, the mean value of the participants' writing achievement increased from 1.94 to 3.49. It can be concluded that the writing achievement of the experimental group was positively and significantly affected from portfolio-keeping. In other words, portfolio-keeping considerably increased overall writing achievement of the participants in the experimental group. This considerable achievement of the participants in writing is probably related to applying such stages of the process-based writing as pre-writing, drafting, and rewriting (Harmer, 2007) as Leki (1995) also advocates that the process approach to teaching writing gives importance to the phases of the writing process rather than to the final product. In addition, feedback given to the written work and also the individual conferences between the teacher and the students during the writing process (Ferris, 2003) might have contributed to the acquisition of writing skill on the part of the learners.

Table 7. Comparison of the First Writing Task and the Final Writing Task Results: Writing Achievement Scores of the Experimental Group

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	P
Writing Achievement	Pre Writing Task	15	1.94	.82	-4.65	.00*
	Post Writing Task	15	3.49	.98		

* $p < 0.05$

Table 8 shows the results of Paired Sampled T-test as to the first and final writing tasks of control group regarding the writing sub-skills. By examining the results of Paired Samples T-test analysis, it can be concluded that there were statistically no significant differences between the first and final writing task values of the control group with regard to such sub-skills as focus ($T = -.40$; $p = .68$, $p > 0.05$), elaboration ($T = -1.04$; $p = .30$, $p > 0.05$), organization ($T = -1.46$; $p = .15$, $p > 0.05$), conventions ($T = -.79$; $p = .43$, $p > 0.05$, and vocabulary ($T = -.74$; $p = .46$, $p > 0.05$).

Table 8. Comparison of the First Writing Task and the Final Writing Task Results: Writing Sub-Skills of the Control Group

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	P
Focus	Pre-Task	15	2.33	1.17	-.40	.68
	Post Task	15	2.53	1.50		
Elaboration	Pre Task	15	1.86	.91	-1.04	.30
	Post Task	15	2.26	1.16		
Organization	Pre Task	15	1.73	.79	-1.46	.15
	Post Task	15	2.26	1.16		
Conventions	Pre Task	15	1.86	.74	-.79	.43
	Post Task	15	2.13	1.06		
Vocabulary	Pre Task	15	2.33	.97	-.74	.46
	Post Task	15	2.66	1.44		

By examining the results of Paired Samples T-test analysis for the experimental group, it can be concluded that there was a statistically significant difference between the first and final writing task values of the experimental group with regard to focus sub-skill ($T = -5.80$; $p = .00$, $p < 0.05$), elaboration sub-skill ($T = -4.56$; $p = .00$, $p < 0.05$), organization sub-skill ($T = -4.46$; $p = .02$, $p < 0.05$), conventions sub-skill ($T = -2.50$; $p = .01$, $p < 0.05$), and vocabulary sub-skill ($T = -4.31$; $p = .00$, $p < 0.05$) (see Table 9).

Table 9. Comparison of the First Writing Task and the Final Writing Task Results: Writing Sub-Skills of the Experimental Group

Variable	Category	N	Mean	SD	T	P
Focus	Pre Task	15	2.06	1.09	-5.80	.00*
	Post Task	15	4.13	.83		
Elabora- tion	Pre Task	15	1.93	.96	-4.56	.00*
	Post Task	15	3.66	1.11		
Organiza- tion	Pre Task	15	1.73	.70	-4.46	.02*
	Post Task	15	3.13	.99		
Conven- tions	Pre Task	15	1.66	.61	-2.50	.01*
	Post Task	15	2.53	1.18		
Vocabu- lary	Pre Task	15	2.33	1.04	-4.31	.00*
	Post Task	15	4.00	1.06		

* $p < 0.05$

Weekly Development of the Writing Tasks of the Control and Experimental Groups

Table 10 shows the developmental process of the writing sub-skills during the 16 weeks' period for the control group. Within this time, the participants in the control group did not keep portfolios but they received feedback for their writing tasks. It can be concluded from Table 10 that the participants in the control group were able to improve their writing sub-skills slightly, which was expected.

Table 10. Development of Writing Sub-Skills for the Control Group

Variable	Mean values						
	1 st task	2 nd task	3 rd task	4 th task	5 th task	6 th task	7 th task
Focus	2.33	2.67	2.67	2.60	2.50	2.70	2.53
Elaboration	1.86	2.07	2.10	2.40	2.10	2.55	2.26
Organization	1.73	1.87	2.00	2.07	2.32	2.33	2.26
Conventions	1.86	1.73	1.67	1.87	2.13	2.40	2.13
Vocabulary	2.33	2.33	2.27	2.40	2.47	2.53	2.66

Table 11 shows the developmental process of the writing sub-skills for the experimental group over sixteen weeks. During this time, the participants in the experimental group wrote second drafts and received feedback for their writing tasks. It can be concluded from Table 11 that the participants in the experimental group consistently improved their writing sub-skills.

Table 11. Development of Writing Sub-Skills for the Experimental Group

Variable	Mean values						
	1 st task	2 nd task	3 rd task	4 th task	5 th task	6 th task	7 th task
Focus	2.06	2.93	3.27	3.40	3.33	3.73	4.13
Elaboration	1.93	2.00	2.40	3.13	3.47	3.60	3.66
Organization	1.73	2.20	2.47	2.40	2.87	3.67	3.13
Conventions	1.66	1.87	1.80	2.33	2.33	2.80	2.53
Vocabulary	2.33	2.47	2.67	3.87	3.60	3.73	4.00

Views of Learners about Portfolio-Keeping

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with the participants in the experimental group as the final part of the data collection process. The results of content analysis show that almost all

of the participants presenting their opinions liked portfolio activities. According to the analysis of data collected from the interviews with fifteen participants, twelve participants liked the portfolio activities in writing classes, while one participant did not like the portfolio activities and another participant was neutral about the portfolio activities. Considering the replies, it can be concluded that the participants had positive attitudes towards the portfolio activities in writing classes; therefore, it can be commented that portfolio-keeping affected participants' writing motivation positively.

Benefits of Portfolio Activities

The second question of the interview investigated the benefits of portfolio activities to the participants in writing classes (see Table 12). The majority of the participants pointed out the issue of “*sentence structure*” as one of the benefits of portfolio-keeping. Furthermore, nine participants stated that they benefited from portfolios in terms of “*vocabulary*.” In addition, seven participants gave statements regarding the issue of “*research skills*”. Moreover, six participants made a statement related to “*spelling*” and five participants stated that they took advantage of portfolios with regard to “*conjunctions*”. The last theme that emerged from the statements of five participants was “*exams*”.

Table 12. Benefits of Portfolio Activities

Participant No:	Themes
P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P10, P12, P14, P15 (9)	Sentence Structure
P1, P3, P4, P5, P6, P8, P10, P12, P15 (9)	Vocabulary
P1, P2, P3, P6, P8, P9, P12 (7)	Research Skills
P1, P4, P8, P9, P10, P14 (6)	Spelling
P4, P5, P6, P7, P15 (5)	Conjunctions
P1, P2, P3, P9, P14 (5)	Exams

Theme 1: Sentence Structure

According to the data gathered from the interviews with the participants in the experimental group, it is clear that most of the students reported positively about the contribution of keeping portfolios in composing better sentences. For example, Participant (P) 4 said, “*I can compose longer sentences and longer paragraphs after portfolio keeping process.*” To support this claim, P5 said, “*To be honest, I couldn't manage to form grammatical and meaningful sentences in English before. After portfolio keeping process my ability to write sentences in English has almost doubled while writing a composition as I have increased my vocabulary capacity.* Regarding this issue, P12 said, “*I have used the words properly and more comfortably in the sentence. Now I can make clearer sentences. I can piece together vocabulary easily. My imagination has improved as well as writing.* Finally, related to sentence structure P15 said, “*I had difficulty in deciding how to start a sentence but these difficulties gradually decreased in the course of time.*”

Such statements of the participants may indicate that portfolio application was beneficial for students regarding “*sentence structure*”. Throughout the study, the participants completed 14 writing tasks and also wrote 14 second drafts. Then, the participants received feedback from their teacher with face to face conference. Being exposed to so many writing activities must have contributed to their sentence structure skills positively. Furthermore, teacher feedback showed the participants their deficiencies related to sentences and the participants focused on these specifically. Gaining new vocabulary during the portfolio-keeping process may have also

facilitated their sentence structure abilities. It can be concluded that portfolio application conducted with process writing principles contributed to the sentence structure ability of the participants.

Theme 2: Vocabulary

The majority of the participants benefited from portfolios in terms of “vocabulary” knowledge as well. Related to vocabulary, P1 said, *“I have learnt new words and used them in my paragraphs.”* Furthermore, P8 said, *“Portfolios provided me with correct pronunciations of some vocabulary and helped me to find suitable vocabulary for a sentence.”* P10 also said, *“I learnt the meanings of the words that I did not know before and portfolio activities increased my vocabulary capacity”*. Considering all these statements, it can be inferred that portfolio application contributed to the vocabulary knowledge of the participants to a great extent. This may be due to the participants’ using dictionary to complete the writing assignments and also doing search on the Internet for portfolio assignments, which might have increased their vocabulary knowledge.

Theme 3: Research Skills

The data collected through the interviews revealed that almost half of the participants improved their research skills by means of portfolio assignments. For example, P2 said, *“The assignments given by our teacher improved my research skills as well.”* Related to research skills, P3 said, *“I learnt how to find information on the Internet and how to transform knowledge into writing.”* In addition, P8 said, *“Thanks to research assignments, I improved my research skills, discovered environment and could understand what was happening around me.”* When these statements are considered, it can be concluded that the participants improved their research skills while searching for appropriate vocabulary for sentences and doing research on a particular topic in order to complete their writing tasks.

Theme 4: Spelling

According to the data gathered from the interviews, six participants stated that they had decreased spelling problems in writing. For example, P4 said, *“As I was keeping a regular file, I had the opportunity to go back and review my mistakes. Therefore, I realized my spelling mistakes and corrected them.”* Furthermore, P14 said, *“I can write words more accurately.”* Also, P10 said, *“Portfolio activities particularly improved my spelling in writing.”* Taking these statements into consideration, it can be clearly seen that the students noticed their spelling mistakes by looking at their previous assignments in their portfolio files. As the participants regularly did the writing assignments, they might have had the chance of using some words repeatedly and so correcting the problematic words.

Theme 5: Conjunctions

The data gathered from the interviews showed that five of the participants started to use new conjunctions throughout the study. For example, P6 said, *“Before portfolio-keeping, I had not used conjunctions in my writing and I changed this. I am using connectors such as but, because and maybe.”* In addition, P5 said, *“I learnt very useful conjunctions during portfolio-keeping process. For instance, I had not known the meaning of ‘in order to’ and I realized that I can use it to give purpose in a sentence.”* As participant P7 said, *“I was rarely utilizing conjunctions but now I am using them as much as I can.”* As one can see, the participants started to use conjunctions more after the portfolio application. It can be deduced that the participants needed to learn more about the use of conjunctions while completing their assignments and also the feedback they received directed them to use conjunctions more often.

Theme 6: Exams

The statements of the participants indicated portfolio application as beneficial for participants in examinations as well. To give an example, P2 said, “*Our teacher usually asks reading and writing questions in the exams and I was having some problems while building sentences for these questions. After portfolio activities, I started to answer the questions easily in the exams.*” To support this claim, P3 said, “*I improved my English thanks to portfolio activities so I got higher grades from the last exams.*” In addition, P9 said, “*Portfolio assignment helped me in my English exams.*” Considering these statements, it can be concluded that some participants benefited from portfolio tasks and became more successful in the English exams. This may have resulted from their constant exposure to English throughout 16 weeks, during which the participants learnt new vocabulary and conjunctions as well as they had the opportunity to see their grammar, spelling, and word choice errors. By revising their mistakes, the participants probably did not make the same mistakes in the exams and got higher marks in the exams.

Considering all these views of the participants, it can be concluded that the participants benefited from portfolio tasks in many ways.

Problems Faced during Portfolio Tasks

The aim of the third interview question was to find out the difficulties the participants faced while completing the portfolio tasks (see Table 13). Almost half of the participants stated “*lack of vocabulary*” as a problem while performing the portfolio tasks. In addition, five of the participants stated difficulty in “*paragraph organization*” and another five participants said that they did not encounter any difficulties while completing the portfolio tasks; as a result, “*no difficulties mentioned*” heading turned out to be a theme. The last theme was related to “*time constraints*” as three participants mentioned this as a difficulty.

Table 13. Problems Faced during Portfolio Tasks

Participant No:	Themes
P1, P4, P5, P8, P10, P12, P13 (7)	Lack of Vocabulary
P2, P3, P8, P10, P11 (5)	Paragraph Organization
P6, P7, P9, P14, P15 (5)	No difficulties mentioned
P5, P8, P13 (3)	Time constraints

Theme 1: Lack of Vocabulary

According to the data obtained from the interviews, it is clear that most of the participants had difficulty in finding appropriate vocabulary while completing their portfolio tasks. For example, P4 said, “*I had difficulty in finding the meaning of some words.*” To support this claim, P8 said, “*I had difficulty in finding words because finding words was troublesome at some times*”. Regarding this issue, P13 said, “*Words didn't come to my mind. I looked at the dictionary. I couldn't find them in the dictionary, so I searched it on the Internet.*”

The statements of the participants may indicate that finding appropriate vocabulary was difficult for most of the participants. Their level was A2 level, so their English levels may have caused this hardship. Furthermore, the participants encountered portfolio-keeping for the first time in their life, which might have affected their vocabulary knowledge. The participants had not written compositions, essays or stories before the portfolio application, so they may not have needed to use various words before the portfolio-keeping process. P4, P8, and P13 remarked that they had difficulty in finding words in the dictionary, which may have resulted from their inability to use the dictionaries.

Theme 2: Paragraph Organization

The qualitative data gathered from the interviews also showed that five of the participants had difficulty in “paragraph organization”. With regard to paragraph organization, P3 said, “*At first, I had difficulty in writing a paragraph in the portfolio because I couldn't organize my opinions or sentences. The portfolio improved it over time.*” In addition, P10 said, “*I had difficulty in deciding how to start a paragraph.*” Finally, P11 said, “*Some of my sentences were irrelevant with each other in the paragraphs*”. Considering all these statements, it can be deduced that some students were unable to organize their ideas easily.

According to the statements of the participants it was clear that paragraph organization was challenging for some of them. It can also be concluded that they did not know how to start or conclude sentences effectively because writing was not a common practice in English language classes.

Theme 3: No difficulties mentioned

P6, P7, P9, P14, P15 stated that they did not face any difficulties while doing the portfolio assignments, and this may have resulted from constant support given by the teacher throughout the study.

Theme 4: Time constraints

The data gathered from the interviews showed that some participants had problems with “time constraints”. For example, P5 said, “*Sometimes I had little time, so I couldn't afford my time. I mean, the biggest problem I encountered was not having enough time. I could write better if I had more time.*” To support this claim, P8 said, “*I couldn't complete some of my portfolio tasks in time because it took too much time*”. Similarly, P13 said, “*I wish I had more time*”.

The statements of the participants revealed that some participants had problems with completing portfolio assignments in time. This may be due to the intensive process of writing which could have been overwhelming for some of the participants. In addition, the participants had other subjects to study and assignments to complete, which might have also taken a great deal of their time.

Discussion

One of the aims of the present study was to examine the effect of portfolio-keeping on a group of young learners' motivation towards L2 writing. It can be said that the writing motivation level of the experimental group was positively affected by portfolio application. There was not a significant increase in the motivation level of the control group participants, while the writing motivation level of the participants in the experimental group increased as there was a difference between the pre- and post-study mean values. The interview results carried out with the experimental group participants also supported this claim as the majority of the participants had a positive attitude towards portfolio-keeping. These findings agree with the findings of Farahian and Avarzamani (2018) because their study also revealed that experimental group students had a positive attitude towards formative writing portfolio assessment and teacher/peer feedback. Moreover, the findings of the present study are parallel with the study of Ali and Hadidi (2017) because according to their study, portfolio assessment in writing classes motivated students to learn and made students more confident and reflective. Similarly, Ozek's (2009) investigation of the effect of portfolio application on seventh grade students' reading comprehension skills and their attitudes towards English lesson revealed that portfolio implementation increased the motivation level of the participants towards English lessons. Goctu's (2016) examination of the perspectives of students on portfolio assessment of EFL writing also showed that portfolio as-

assessment was rewarding for boosting learner motivation and also for developing positive attitudes towards writing courses. Similarly, Huang's (2012) study revealed that portfolio implementation promoted students' learning motivation. The present study is also compatible with the study conducted by Saavedra and Campos (2018) as the students in both studies appreciated the constant feedback throughout portfolio implementation and had a positive attitude towards multiple drafting and the writing process approach. As can be understood from these studies, portfolio implementation highly affects writing motivation of language learners positively; therefore, students can benefit from portfolios in L2 writing classes at most.

On the other hand, the findings of the present study contradict with the ones in a study carried out by Nassirdoost and Mall-Amiri (2015). In their study portfolio assessment had a significant influence on EFL learners' vocabulary achievement; however, it did not have a significant impact on EFL learners' motivation level unlike our study. In addition, Demirel and Duman's (2015) investigation of the effect of portfolio application on student achievement and motivation revealed that portfolio use had a positive effect on student achievement; however, portfolio use did not affect student motivation towards English lesson in their study, while it did in our study. In another study, Erdoğan (2006) came up with similar results to these studies as portfolio implementation did not make a significant difference on the attitudes of students and their achievement.

To conclude, similar to many other research studies, the participants in the experimental group in our particular study developed a positive attitude towards writing skill. The first reason of this change may result from the constant support given by the teacher throughout the portfolio-keeping process. Accordingly, the students had the opportunity to go back and revise their previous assignments; therefore, they were able to see how far they progressed in writing and they gained the sense of achievement in writing classes. In addition, with the help of their teachers' constant feedback and support, the students both made progress in L2 writing and developed meta-cognitive awareness on writing stages and organization skills. Regarding this issue, Lee (2007) stated that "students need feedback that consists of concrete, specific information about their progress with reference to the learning goals/success criteria so that they know how to proceed with their writing" (p. 114). Nevertheless, some other studies indicated that students were dissatisfied with portfolio tasks and considered portfolio writing as a demanding and time-consuming work (Demirel & Duman, 2015; Nassirdoost & Mall-Amiri, 2015). Nevertheless, these issues can be managed as portfolios are flexible and can be time-efficient and more encouraging (Jones, 2012).

We also found that portfolio-keeping and assessment significantly affected the participants' writing skill. As there was a statistically significant difference between the mean values of the experimental group participants' first writing tasks and final writing tasks with regard to writing achievement, writing products of the students who experienced portfolio writing improved dramatically from the first writing assignment to the final writing assignment. This finding is in harmony with the findings of Nezakatgoo (2010), who investigated the effect of portfolio assessment on final examination scores of EFL students' writing skill. The results of the study showed that the portfolio group students had improved their writing skill and got higher scores on the final examination. Another study which supported our findings was conducted by Tabatabaei and Assefi (2012) as the results of their study revealed that experimental group participants were more successful in writing performance compared to control group participants. Similar to our study, Ali and Hadidi (2017) also found that writing portfolio can be accepted as a rewarding tool for improving students' writing skills, and it allows teachers to provide sudden, clear and efficient written feedback to students. Moreover, Taki and Heidari's (2011) study indicated that portfolio based writing affected language learning and writing ability positively as well as developing a positive attitude toward portfolio assessment similar to our study.

Regarding focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary sub-skills of EFL writing, there were no significant differences between the first and final tasks of control group participants while there were statistically significant differences between the first and final writing tasks of the portfolio group participants in terms of focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary writing sub-skills. These findings are in line with the findings of Arslan (2014) as his findings indicated that the process of blogging and portfolio-keeping improved the writing skills of the students in terms of process, organization, content, language use, vocabulary, mechanics, and accuracy. Another study which supported our findings was conducted by Ghoorchaee et al. (2010). The results of their study indicated that portfolio group participants outperformed control group participants in their overall writing ability in terms of focus, elaboration, organization, and vocabulary. In parallel with these studies, Ok (2014) investigated the reflections of freshmen learners at an ELT department in Turkey on the portfolio process and his study also indicated that the portfolio-keeping process helped the participants build their self-confidence in language and vocabulary use. All in all, our data revealed that portfolio-keeping considerably increased the overall L2 writing achievement of the students in the experimental group and the portfolio-keeping process affected the experimental group students' writing sub-skills positively. Focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary writing sub-skills of the participants in the experimental group improved considerably at the end of the study, while the writing sub-skills of the control group did not demonstrate such an improvement.

Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of portfolio-keeping on a group of young learners' L2 writing achievement and their motivation towards L2 writing and also examined the impact of portfolio-keeping on such writing sub-skills as focus, elaboration, organization, conventions, and vocabulary. In addition, opinions of the participants on the portfolio-keeping process were gathered in detail. The present study revealed that portfolio-keeping increased the writing motivation of the students and also improved their overall writing achievement and writing sub-skills.

Since the study indicates that portfolio-keeping is beneficial for young learners of English in writing classes, some pedagogical implications can be drawn here for teachers working with young learners. First of all, based on the findings of the present study, it can be suggested that EFL teachers can make use of portfolios in their classes to motivate their students towards learning English, especially in writing classes. With constant support given by the teachers, EFL learners can overcome the sense of failure in writing classes. Writing the first draft, second draft, editing, and revising steps of process writing can help students develop higher writing proficiency levels. These stages can enable the students to have a self-evaluation which moves away the pressure of traditional writing classes. In order to achieve a more student-centered and innovative environment in language teaching, EFL teachers can make use of portfolios the most. Portfolios can also be utilized to incorporate the learners actively in language learning and help them gain autonomy in language learning accordingly. Portfolio application may, therefore, contribute to the success of learners thanks to a more learner-centered approach and ceaseless support offered by the teacher.

The results of the study may not be generalized for early young learners, though. Therefore, further research can be conducted with primary school students. In this study, the researchers investigated the effect of portfolio-keeping only on writing skill. A study investigating the effect of portfolio-keeping on four skills, writing, speaking, listening and reading, can be more rewarding for the language learning process. It is recommended that further research should be conducted in different institutions because this study remained limited with one institution. On the other hand, data collection process of the study was completed in four months, and further

research can be performed over a longer period of time. Further studies may also investigate the effect of portfolios on self-efficacy and autonomy of learners. Furthermore, e-portfolios could be performed if the potential of the target group permits. In addition, the attitude of the students towards paper-based portfolios and e-portfolios can be investigated as a further step.

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The Effect of Portfolio-Keeping on EFL Young Learners' Writing Achievement and Their Motivation Towards Writing

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