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The Impact of Portfolio Assessment

on Learners' Achievement

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To my supervisor and instructor
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List of Abbreviations

PA   Portfolio Assessment

AfL   Assessment *for* Learning

AoL   Assessment *of* Learning

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Abstract

The purpose of present study was to investigate the extent to which portfolio assessment influences learners' achievement, their learning process, and their attitude towards assessment for learning English. From the two groups involved in the study, the focus group received the treatment whereas the comparison group received placebo. The instruments used were1) pre and post instruction tests, 2) pre and post attitudinal questionnaires for students, 3) self-assessment checklists, 4) questionnaire on portfolio assessment-and 5) semi-structured interview with students on portfolio assessment. The pre and post instruction test data was analyzed through non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test, which showed a significant difference between the comparison and focus group. In order to see the relationship between self-assessment checklists scores and the progress tests scores, Spearman's rank order correlation was used. Cross-case analysis of the content of the interview data was performed after dividing the questions into two categories of "attitude" and "learning". Each category was analyzed separately in order to group the most common answers. The results of the questionnaires and interviews showed that portfolio assessment had positive effect on students' achievement. The students reported that the process of portfolio assessment enabled them to become actively involved in the learning process.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Assessment is probably the most important

thing we can do to help our students learn"

(Brown 2004, p.81)

Within the last few decades, in the field of TEFL there has been a paradigm shift both in teaching and in testing (Farhady 2006, p.47). There have been numerous innovations in educational theory and practice from the traditional teacher centered process to student-centered one. Correspondingly, in the field of assessment there has been significant changes which affect students' learning and classroom practices (Benson & Smith 1998; Brown 2004). Learner-centered language teaching and a new interest of authenticity of language assessment came to expand the role of a learner (Bachman, 2000) and to give teachers opportunity to monitor the process of learning of their students (Farhady 2006, p.47). Many practitioners and assessment specialists have tried to find ways to encourage the active involvement of learners in the process of language assessment (Ekbatani 2000, p.1). Thus, there was a need to redefine the role of assessment from ranking the students as winners and losers according to their achievement into a far more productive way to help all students succeed (Stiggins, 2005). Consequently, more student-centered and alternative forms of assessment, such as portfolios, interviews, journals, self- or peer assessment have become common in the classroom settings (Richards & Renandya 2002, p.335).

One of the alternative ways of assessment and teaching is the notion of implementing portfolios in various contexts, especially in educational ones. Having advantages of being authentic, performance-based, promoting student autonomy, serving a wide range of purposes and many other merits portfolio assessment (PA) has the value of being the cornerstone of learner-directed assessment (Ekbatani, 2000) and is considered to be a useful tool for providing a continuous record of students' learning development (Genessee & Upshur, 1996, p.99). The word 'portfolio' is commonly associated with art, where artists keep a collection

of their best paintings and sketches to introduce to others for the purpose of evaluation (Angelo & Cross, 1993). In education, portfolio is defined as a cumulative and ongoing collection of entries that are selected and commented on by the student, the teacher and/or peers, to assess the student's progress in the development of a competency (Forgette-Giroux & Simon, 2000). It is a purposeful collection of student's work that shows their efforts, progress and achievement, and almost all the learners of all ages benefit from the real nature of portfolio development (Brown 2004, p.256).

1.1 Significance of the Study

The shift in the assessment landscape has resulted in an increased use of portfolios as an alternative way of assessing the students' achievement and involving them into the learning process (Genessee and Upshur 1996; Bailey 1998). Although research has provided some information on how portfolio assessment has impact on learners' motivation, autonomy, independent thinking (Rao 2002, Duffy, Jones & Thomas 1999, Torosyan, 2006) there is a room to investigate whether the PA, while undergoing all these processes, has impact on learners' achievement and engages them into the learning process. The study is also aimed at investigating whether being involved in compilation of portfolio may affect the enhancement of students' positive attitude towards assessment for learning.

1.2 Research Questions

The research questions of the present study are as follows:

1. *Does portfolio assessment affect learners' achievement in English?*

2. *Does creating portfolio affect students' learning process?*

3. *To what extent does portfolio completion influence the learners' attitude towards assessment **for** learning?*

1.3 The Structure of the Thesis

The thesis encompasses four more chapters:

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature on the theoretical background of assessment, assessment for learning and portfolio assessment.

Chapter 3 describes the methodology that was used to conduct this research. It presents the participants and setting of the study, research design, instrumentation and procedure of data collection.

Chapter 4 illustrates and analyses the quantitative and qualitative data collected in attempted to provide an answer to the research questions.

Chapter 5 summarizes the findings, specifies the answers of the research questions, points out the main limitations and implications of the study and provides suggestions for further research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The central theme of this study is to investigate the impact of portfolio assessment on learners' achievement and their learning process. This chapter will review relevant literature related to present study. First, it will define the concept of *assessment* drawing a parallel with the concepts of *testing* and *evaluation*. It will also reveal the distinction between the summative and formative assessment and will expand the discussion into the importance of assessment *for* learning in the classroom. The next step after discussing the strategies of assessment for learning will be to give the theoretical background of portfolio assessment going deep into exploring its purpose, general guidelines, types, pros and cons and reflection as the "heart' of portfolio assessment.

2. 1 Assessment

For many students and teachers the idea of tests, examinations and evaluations carries negative emotions, as they call up "bad memories of being anxious, fearing failure, and worries about what others may think of us based on or performance" (Berry 2008, p.1). They see assessment as being tested or graded since at schools and at universities only grades or test scores measure their learning or rank them as achievers or failures. However, the term assessment "refers to much more than tests and grades" and involves development of materials, tasks, processes, activities that are used to determine "how well and how much learning is taking place" (Haley & Austin, 2004:117).

Though the field of education is moving forward in the area of assessment, there is no a common consensus among the researchers on the use of fundamental terms and it becomes difficult "to engage in meaningful discourse within the field of assessment" (Frey & Schmitt, 2007:403). In educational measurement literature, *assessment* is an umbrella term for testing and all other forms of assessment, whereas *testing* is a term for one particular form of assessment (Leung & Lewkowicz, 2006; Haley & Austin, 2004; Clapham, 2000). *Test* is a

subcategory of assessment, which is "a formal, systematic procedure used to elicit information about students' behavior" (Coombe et al. 2007, p. XV). They are measurement instruments that are designed to obtain information of an individual behavior and to quantify characteristics of those individuals (Bachman, 1990). Eliciting a specific sample of behavior makes tests distinguish from other types of measurement and provides primary justification for the use of language tests. According to Bachman, (1990, p.21) the preciseness of tests enables the test user "to make inferences about a given ability that we need to test" and provides us with the means for concentrating on the specific language abilities that are of interest. Thus, simply defined, test is a method that measures "a person's ability, knowledge, or performance in a given domain (Brown, 2004:3). Test is not a single method of collecting information but consists of a certain techniques, procedures, or items that require some performance from the test taker (Genesee & Upshur, 1996; Brown, 2004). Various test tasks represent various methods of obtaining performance, such as reading texts accompanied by questions that require written or multiple-choice answer, a sentence completion task in which one word has been deleted from each sentence and the test taker must supply the missing words (Genesee & Upshur, 1996;), or supplying simple information in a table, following on a map, labeling a picture and so on (Hughes, 1989). Testing methods can affect test takers' scores, as they should master certain kinds of skill or knowledge to respond or to perform on test tasks. Consequently, test takers who are experienced or skilled enough at certain kinds of testing methods perform better than those who lack such experience (Genesee & Upshur, 1996).

Assessment is a broader term than test or measurement and it "means applying a set of rules to an attribute of something or someone to obtain quantitative information about it" (Brookhart, 2004:5). It can also include collecting qualitative information and both kinds of information can be useful assessment information to be used for some purpose. According to

Brookhart (2004) typical classroom assessment includes teacher's feedback to students for their studying, making instructional decisions, grading and advising students about additional coursework.

Evaluation, however, goes one step further and means "using assessment information to make judgments about worth of something" (Brookhart 2004, p.6). The term *evaluation* tends to be used somewhat ambiguously in relation to other terms such as *assessment* and *testing* (Lynch, 1996, 2003; Rea-Dickins & Germaine, 1992, Brown, 1989). In the interest of clarity, it is essential to differentiate between these terms. *Evaluation* is a somewhat wider term than *assessment* regarding its scopes and purposes. According to Rea-Dickins & Germaine (1992), the focus and purpose of *evaluation* is the 'means' analysis intended to serve the learning process; whereas, *assessment* is limited to the 'end' of learning " in terms of what the learner has achieved at particular points" (p.5). There is an overlap between *evaluation* and *assessment*: *evaluation* can make use of assessment instruments (including tests), but it is not limited to such forms of information gathering (Lynch, 1996; 2003; Brown, 1989). It may include, for example, questionnaires, unstructured interviews, teacher ratings of students (or student ratings of teachers), observations or diaries. It is worth mentioning that "*assessment* may also be used as a super-ordinate to *testing*; i.e. *assessment* includes, but is not limited to, measurement procedures generally referred to as tests (Lynch 2003, p.1). Thus, evaluation is a broader area, which encompasses all kinds of measurements and information both of quantitative and qualitative nature used to describe the achievements of a given program, provide explanations for these, and give ways for further developments (Brown, 1989; Kiely, 2009).

2.1.1 The Role of Assessment

Generally it is believed that assessment plays a crucial role in education and involves all learning and teaching variables (Farhady, 2006). Within the last few decades, assessment has undergone a paradigm shift from psychometrics to a wider form of educational assessment, from a testing and examination culture to an assessment culture (Gipps, 1994). It has taken a wide scope in the field of education and has broadened the range of its purposes. Many educators started rethinking the role of assessment by taking into account various questions such us: what kinds of assessment will maximize the students' achievement and how it can be used to serve the students' learning (Arter, 2003). The major assumption is that "assessment can and should be more than a check on learning that comes at the end" (Earl, 2003: xi). It refers to a variety of ways of collecting information on a learner's abilities or achievement which must become a part of the ongoing learning process.

Research shows that if the teachers refocus their students' attention from large-scale, high-stakes tests towards student-involved classroom assessment, then it will be possible to develop more powerful and fostering assessment system (Arter, 2003). This system will be in the classroom where learning takes place and is under the teacher's and students' control. This in its turn will empower the students with skills of self-assessment and self-correction and will lead them to look forward to assessment "as a source of information and confirmation, rather than dreading assessment as a source of judgment or control" (Arter 2003, p.3).

Being at the very heart of teaching and learning process, assessment enables "to evaluate the teaching, to consider the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum … and to allow us to pass on information to parents about pupil's progress" (Wintle 1999, p.8). Consequently, the discussion on assessment cannot be done without making connections with other aspects of teaching and learning (Lambert & Lines, 2000). Lambert and Lines (2000)

highlight the role of assessment in various aspects of teaching and learning. According to

them, the purpose of assessment lies in; i) providing feedback to teachers and pupils about

progress to support future learning (*the formative role*), ii) providing information about the

level of pupils' achievements at points during and at the end of school (*the summative role*),

iii) providing means for selecting by qualification (*the certification role*), and iv) contributing

to the information on which judgments are made concerning the effectiveness or quality of

individuals and institutions in the system as a whole (*the evaluation role*) (Lambert & Lines

2000, p.4).

It is a process of gathering, interpreting, recording and using information about

pupils' responses to educational tasks (Lambert & Lines, 2000). It decides how well the

students learn and provides feedback to students, educators, parents, policy makers, and the

public about the effectiveness of educational services (Pellegrino et al, 2001). Thus, we need

assessment that not only serves as a provider of information about the students learning and

achievement, but also improves every student's achievement. From this point of view,

assessment changes its focus from assessment *of* learning to assessment *for* learning.

2.1.2 Summative vs. Formative Assessment

An important distinction of assessment is how the assessment procedures should be

used; that is, the function of assessment (Brown, 2004). Lambert and Lines (2000) characterize

the function of assessment in terms of two 'cultures'; i. e. 'assessment *of* education' which is

often described as summative assessment and 'assessment *for* education' which is termed as

formative assessment. Similarly, many researchers and educational experts distinguish

between 'assessment *of* learning', 'assessment *for* learning' (Black & William, 1998a,b; Arter,

2003; Stiggins and Chappuis, 2006) and 'assessment *as* learning' (Earl, 2003). The purpose of

'assessment *of* learning' is summative, which is intended to certify learning and report to

parents and students about students' progress in school (Earl, 2003). For example, high-stakes, standardized accountability assessments are assessments of learning, which occur not only in the classroom but also through external assessment systems (Arter, 2003). Educational experts use *summative assessment* to verify the amount that individual students have learned and to provide an accountability measure for students and educational systems as a whole (Hagstrom, 2006). Thus, summative assessment aims at measuring or summarizing what a student has obtained and learned which usually occurs at the end of the course. Some of the most familiar forms of summative assessment are end-of unit tests and grades which are to determine whether the students have achieved a certain level of competency after finishing a particular course (Pellegrino et al, 2001; Anderson, 2003) or whether they have attained the objectives set out in the curriculum (Coombe et al, 2007). The information obtained from summative assessment is intended "to sum up what has been learned as a result of the instruction provided" (Anderson 2003, p. 46).

Historically, formative assessment was named so to be distinguished from summative assessment. Assessment becomes *formative* when the information is used to adapt teaching and learning to meet the students' needs (Black and William, 1998). From formative assessment we get information that is useful for "continued student learning, positive classroom change, and other improvements" (Brookhart 2005, p.6). In the classroom teachers use different forms of assessment and the purpose of it is "to inform day-to-day and month-to-month decisions about next steps for instruction, to give students feedback about their progress, and to motivate students" (Pellegrino et al 2001, p.37). However, most of our classroom assessment is *formative,* which evaluates the students in the process of learning and focuses on the ongoing development of learner's language (Brown, 2004).

According to Black and William, (1998a) formative assessment is at the heart of teaching and it is given during a course by providing feedback to students and is carried out

for improving the instruction. When teachers know how the students are progressing or where they are having problems, they can use this information to make necessary instructional changes, such as using alternative instructional approaches or having more opportunities for practice. According to Pellegino et al, (2001) one of the most important roles of assessment is giving informative feedback to students during instruction and learning for their practice of skills and acquisition to be effective.

Formative assessment is more than testing frequently or using information to plan further steps. It changes teaching and instructions taking into account ongoing assessment results and makes students get involved in their own assessment and goal setting (Arter, 2003). By its very nature, formative assessment implies that the teacher's ongoing assessment of pupils and their progress is crucial for promoting and enhancing learning. Arter mentions several approaches, which assist to involve students in assessment for learning (2003, pp.5-6):

- Help students understand the learning targets they are to reach (i.e. what we want students to know and be able to do at the end of each lesson)
- Engage students in self-assessment
- Help students see their own improvement with respect to the learning targets
- Give students opportunities to express their understanding (i.e. teacher-student conferences, reflective writing)
- Encourage students to set goals and determine the next steps to move closer to the target

The involvement of students into assessment process will let them control their own success of learning. Pupils' awareness that assessment is ongoing and it is included in their routine activities helps them to understand that their learning is always being directed.

Consequently, if the teachers structure lesson instructions to direct the students' learning and to assist individuals to progress, then they provide an effective environment for them to learn.

Black and Wiliam (1998) conducted a research review of 250 journal articles and book chapters to determine whether formative assessment raises academic standards in the classroom. They mention that many studies reveal that "innovations that include strengthening the practice of formative assessment produce significant and often substantial learning gains" (Black and William 1998, p.3). Many of these studies conclude that improved formative assessment helps low achievers more than other students and thus raises overall achievement. Being used appropriately, classroom-based formative assessment can positively affect learning and help the learners to improve it receiving feedback about particular qualities of their work along with advice of what they can do to improve (Black and William, 1998). The feedback can be written or verbal and should inform the learner about what has been done well and what needs to be improved in the future. All these definitions emphasize that assessment is formative and it takes place only if it intends to improve student learning; that formative assessment includes both the involvement of both teachers and students; and that formative assessment includes the notion of feedback, that is, 'any information that is provided to the performer of any action about that performance' (Black and William 1998, p.53). Feedback is effective if it is descriptive (versus evaluative or judgmental) and focuses on the learning targets and includes a piece of advice for the students to improve the quality of the work (Arter, 2003). If the teachers consistently provide the students with descriptive feedback it may help them see how they improve the quality of their work and may engage them in repeated self-assessment of their own competence (Stiggins, 2005). Stiggins (2005) believes that this will help the students create their own descriptive feedback, set their future goals of their learning and get more deeply involved into taking responsibility for their own success.

2.2 Assessment *For* Learning

For many years, the role of assessment has been to determine the differences in student learning by ranking them according to their achievement, which leads to have 'winners and losers' at schools (Stiggins, 2007). It is not a secret that students draw conclusions about themselves as learners on the basis of the classroom assessment their teachers perform on them (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2006). Based on the evidence they collect over time, they make decisions about whether they are a success or a failure. Unfortunately, the current system of assessment "fails the learners by focusing on assessment *of* learning instead of assessment *for* learning, and ignores individual learner differences and drives the teaching" (Birenbaum et al 2006, p. 61). As a result of this system, some students succeed and learn more, whereas others fail and fall farther behind. Thus, the new perception of assessment proposed by many educators (c.f. Stiggins, 2005; 2007; Leahy et al., 2005; Chappuis and Stiggins, 2002; Popham, 2006; Birenbaum et al., 2006) is to give confidence, to increase motivation, and to materialize learning potential that exists within every student. Consequently, if we want to help the students learn "we must help them believe that they are capable of succeeding and that success is worth the investment" (Stiggins and Chappuis, 2006 p.11).

In order to achieve this goal in the classroom and to lead the students' progress toward important learning outcome there is a need to see the distinction between assessment *of* learning (AoL) and assessment *for* learning (AfL). These two categories have their role in the classroom, however the main purpose of widening our understanding of the roles is that "each should play to maximize the student achievement while minimizing unintended negative consequences and side effects for students" (Stiggins et al 2006, p.29). Assessment *of* learning happens after learning and is limited in scope which "leads to teaching for assessment and NOT teaching for learning" (Birenbaum et al 2006, p.61). Assessment *for* learning is

conducted throughout teaching and learning, with the purpose to diagnose students' needs, plan the next instructional steps, provide students with feedback they can use to improve the quality of their work, and finally, help students to see and feel responsible for controlling their path to success (Stiggins et al, 2006).

Research evidence accumulated from hundreds of studies conducted around the world shows that the application of principles of assessment *for* learning can increase the gains in student achievement (Stiggins, 2005b). AfL is a teaching and learning process that enhances students learning and where the teachers and students become "partners in the assessment for learning process" (Stiggins 2007, p.23). It is a systematic inquiry into what and how well the students learn what we expect them to learn. According to Stiggins, the most unique feature of assessment for learning process is that "it acknowledges the critical importance of the instructional decisions made by students and their teachers working as a team" (2005b, p.1). It makes the students become 'consumers' of assessment information which enables them to use evidence of their own progress and to understand what success looks like and what are their further steps in learning. The evidence obtained from research revealed that the classroom assessment is effective if it focuses on assessment for learning – that is, it reflects on one's own learning processes (Black & William, 1998). The main characteristics of these two approaches were to show what was to be learned which was shared among pupils, parents and teachers. It also clarified how feedback would improve learning and support progress.

The Assessment Reform Group in 2002 reflected the enhanced role of learners' in the classroom in ten principles of assessment for learning. They emphasize the teacher's role as a facilitator of students' to take on new roles as learners motivating and involving them into the learning process (James & Pedder, 2006 p.28). The principles of assessment for learning are to:

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- understand the learning goals and to identify the criteria that they and their teacher will use for assessing their learning progress;

- understand how they are learning as well as what they are learning;

- reflect on their learning strengths and weaknesses and to develop approaches to learning;

- make progress through formative feedback from peers and their teacher on how to improve their work;

- think about their learning and progress in relation to their own previous performance rather than in comparison with others;

- develop the skills of peer and self-assessment as an important way of engaging in self-reflection, identifying further steps in their learning.

Summing up the principles, it must be stated that effective assessment for learning involves radical shift in classroom teaching and learning through the development of innovative perspectives among teachers and students about each other. There is also a need to acquire and implement new attitudes and practices of learning and teaching (James & Pedder, 2006).

Thus, assessment for learning becomes interplay between the teacher and students (Stiggins et al, 2006). A useful way to think practically about assessment for learning is to know the strategies that can be used in the classroom. The advocates of AFL offer seven strategies of assessment for learning which answer three questions phrased from the student's point of view; that is, *"Where am I going?", " Where am I now?",* and *"How can I close the gap?"* (Stiggins et al 2006; Chappuis, 2009). They mention that some of these strategies have been around for years and the new ones focus on the students as the most important decision makers in the classroom. The strategies they mention are the follows:

➢ **Where am I going?**

Strategy 1: Provide students with a clear and understandable vision of the learning target. The teacher should share with the students the learning targets, objectives or goals in advance of teaching the lesson converting learning targets into student-friendly language.

Strategy 2: Use examples and models of strong and weak work. The teacher should show anonymous students strong and weak work, ask them to analyze these samples for quality and then justify their judgments.

➢ **Where am I now?**

Strategy 3: Offer regular descriptive feedback. Instead of grading the learners teacher should provide the learners with descriptive feedback which reflects student strength and weaknesses with regard to the specific learning targets.

Strategy 4: Teach students to self-assess and set goals. Teachers should teach the students to self–assess as it is a necessary part of learning.

➢ **How can I close the gap?**

Strategy 5: Design lessons to focus on one learning or aspect of quality at a time. If the teacher is working on a learning target having more than one aspect of quality, the recommendation is to build competences one block at a time.

Strategy 6: Teach students focused revision. Teachers should model how they would revise an answer, product, or performance, and then let them revise the similar example.

Strategy 7: Engage students in self-reflection and let them keep track of and share their learning. Teachers should engage students in tracking, reflecting and communicating about their own progress.

Though the seven strategies of assessment for learning deepen the scope of assessment in the classroom, many advocates of assessment for learning still do not reject the importance of assessment of learning. They believe that there should be a better balance between large scale assessment and classroom assessment and between assessment *of*

learning and assessment *for* learning (Arter, 2003; Stiggins, 2005b). The foundation would be an on-going collection of assessment for learning which might make the assessment system perfect (Stiggins, 2005b). How can we keep that balance and to what extent are the strategies of assessment for learning are practically implementable in classroom setting?

2.3 Portfolios

The term portfolio is derived from Latin words *portare*, which means "to carry", and *fogilo*, which refers to "a leaf of sheet of paper". In the world of art and business it is common as a case where the artifacts, sheets of paper, official documents, or artworks can be kept. It is a moveable collection of personal works that enables the compiler to present pieces of his work and partly of himself. He may either pay attention to the progress that he made over a certain period or emphasize the skills he currently possesses (Chapman and King, 2005). Artists, writers, photographers, models, architects have traditionally used portfolios to present their work samples and examples of their best work which can be used "for development and assessment of subject knowledge, acquisition of teaching skills and reflective practice, professional and vocational preparation and employment" (Klenowski 2002, p.1). While describing the concept of portfolio, Hebert (2001) goes back to his childhood memories when in the 1950 their parents would keep large memory boxes or drawers for their children's tests, science fair posters, attempts of poetry in order to represent their acquisition of new skill or feelings of accomplishments:

> *We formed part of our identity from the contents of these memory boxes. We recognized each piece, and its associations with a particular time or experience. We shared these collections with grandparents to reinforce feelings of pride and we reexamined them on rainy days when friends were unavailable for play. Reflecting*

on the collection allowed us to attribute importance to these artifacts, and by

extension to ourselves, as they gave witness to the story of our early school

experiences (ibid, p.9).

The 'memory boxes' the author talks about inspired them for learning and had an important role in showing and developing their identity. However, according to Hebert (2001) these "modern memory boxes" obtained new meaning and purpose nowadays.

In educational contexts portfolios for learning and assessment play more and more important role and are found in all phases of education and professional development (Klenowski, 2002). They play a central role in almost any discussion of 'alternative assessment' or 'assessment for learning' designs (Lynch, 2003).

2.3.1 The Purpose and Definition of Portfolio

Purposes for creating portfolio differ in response to different learning situations. The evidence the students collect in their portfolios can show different collections of measure or process pieces of work that capture a unique picture of how much and how well an individual has learned. This procedure involves the collection of samples of learner work which may give the longitudinal picture of his/her learning (Lynch, 2004). The major purpose of portfolio assessment is to involve students in the evaluation and identification of their needs and strengths and to display their learning growth and progress through their individual portfolio collections. The information gathered from the students' collections help teachers to evaluate and guide their instructions. It also helps them "to identify the gaps in learning so the students receive the instruction he or she needs to learn" (Chapman & King 2005, p.129). The authors believe that portfolio assessment is designed to empower learners, show their stages of progress and performance, increase the student's responsibility in learning, improve self-efficiency, teach them to be self-reflective, open avenues for self-analysis and self-

improvement, guide them to higher levels of thinking through self-evaluation and peer critique, give them pride in accomplishments, create a Showcase of success, supports grades, reveals their need and strengths and eventually, show evidence of the learners' ability.

Klenowski (2001) mentions that portfolio has been developed and used for a number of purposes: summative description, certification or selection, support for teaching and learning, appraisal or promotion and professional development. These purposes require different processes of collection and selection, self-evaluation, reflection, metacognition and substantive conversation. Klenowski (2001) mentions that the possibility to use portfolios for a range of purposes make also clear the curriculum, assessment and pedagogy since portfolio assessment helps to "provide a structure and processes for documenting and reflecting on teaching and related learning practices and making them public" (p.2). It has also become popular over the last several years providing an opportunity for improving the quality of both classroom instruction and large scale learning (Wolfe, et al. 1999).

Peñaflorida (2002) regards portfolios as one of the most useful assessment techniques in writing classes. According to her, the characteristic of writing portfolio is that it contains the students' total writing output to show their overall performance. However, it may also contain only those selections by which the student wants to be evaluated by the teacher. Thus, portfolio gives a chance to reveal the development of student's progress from the beginning to the end of the course. In her words it makes possible the establishment of new ideas in the teaching of English in practice, since they are "so right, so timely, and so useful and, the portfolio in a class is a case in point" (Peñaflorida, 2002:347). The role of portfolio-based writing assessment crept into the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programs as well. Dissatisfaction with the use of timed essay tests for the assessment of writing program called for an alternative that would integrate teaching with assessment and would reflect "the complexity and recursiveness of the writing process and the range of tasks students perform

in the writing class" (Cresswell, 2000: 208). According to Cresswell, (2000) portfolios can provide an accurate reflection of the learning that has taken place and a richer picture of the student's ability as a writer. However, when portfolios are implemented for large-scale assessment purposes, there occur some administrative complexities and considerable demands on those involved in marking the portfolios.

Though the interest in portfolio assessment first emerged in the field of teaching writing skills, it also evolved in other disciplines in language teaching such as reading, literacy, and oral language development (Roa, 2002:115). Recently, language teachers have begun using portfolios in order to encourage their students to select, compile, and display their work (Brown and Hudson, 1998:664). With portfolios teachers can examine students' work over time and do not have to make inferences about students' mastery based on single sampling (Wormeli, 2006). As the interpretation of students' mastery is not based on only one single sampling (i.e. tests and quizzes) it becomes more valid and makes the teachers' consequent decisions more effective. Portfolios have occurred as "the vehicle by which students and teachers organize, manage and analyze life inside and out of school" (Gottlieb, 1995:12).

Many definitions of portfolio are available. It may change according to users' purpose and the way it is going to be used. Many researchers define portfolios to explain its features (Birgin & Baki, 2008). Portfolio assessment can be defined as a purposeful collection of a student's work showing a picture or telling the story of a learner's achievement, skills, efforts and abilities (Brown and Hudson, 1998; Lynch and Shaw, 2005, Genesee & Upshur, 1996). The collection may include student's participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging value and evidence of student self reflection (Paulson, Paulson and Mayer, 1991). Simon and Forgette-Giroux define portfolio as "a cumulative and ongoing collection of entries that are selected and commented on by the

student, the teacher and /or peers, to assess the student's progress in the development of a competency" (2000:36) . This definition reveals the developmental nature of the assessment process and highlights the importance of the students' involvement in portraying what they know and can do (Klenowski, 2002). He adds another significant dimension to this definition; that is " the recognition of the purpose of student reflection on the learning processes involved in the work accomplished and the integration of assessment with teaching and learning" (2002:3)

Maya and O'Malley (1994:4) define portfolio as "a complete assessment procedure that has been systematically planned, implemented, and evaluated". Moreover, the authors distinguish between 'portfolio' and 'portfolio assessment'. A 'portfolio' is a collection of a student's work, experiences, exhibitions, self-ratings, whereas 'portfolio assessment' is the procedure used to plan, collect and analyze the multiple sources of data maintained in the portfolio. Through the use of portfolios, students are able to select and evaluate their own products of learning collecting their work with the teacher's guidance to represent their learning experiences (Rao, 2002). It also portrays learner's achievement and development in terms of skills a learner has mastered and helps the students develop better self-assessment skills and become less reliant on grades (Lambetin & Walker, 1994 in Cook-Benjamin). Phelps argues that portfolios can be used as a means of self-assessment for better learning, meanwhile she considers this kind of assessment as an integral part of learning process, and "a highly individualized expression of learning that is shaped by the experiences of individuals themselves" (2005:39). Thus, being involved in learning process and self-assessment, students may mostly concern about their development and achievement rather than grades.

Since the portfolio is a collection of students' work and shows their skills, progress and abilities, there are some general characteristics to the development of any type of

portfolio. Yencey (1992) shares three essential characteristics of portfolios. Firstly, they are longitudinal in their nature and the teacher spends a lot of time for writers to be developed. The piece of writing the students have can be reshaped and revised within a day or weeks or even a month or two later. Secondly, portfolios are diverse and broad in content. Thirdly, portfolios are almost always collaborative in ownership, as they are created collaboratively by the student as author, with the teacher and other students as partners. According to Yancey (1992) portfolios in the writing classroom are worth exploring as it opens up new opportunities for the learners and teachers. The learners get to know new ways of writing and thinking about their writing, whereas teachers start understanding their students and start thinking about how to teach writing better.

Moya and O'Malley identify five main characteristics which typify model portfolios that can be used as a systematic assessment in instructional development and student evaluation (1994). According to them, a portfolio should be *comprehensive* in order to determine the depth and breadth of students' capabilities through comprehensive data collection and analysis. A portfolio should also be *predetermined* and *systematic* with a prior planned procedure which should be clearly understood   by the students. The contents of the portfolio, data collection schedule and student performance criteria are delineated as part of portfolio planning. Portfolio is *informative* as it is not only meaningful to teachers, students, staff and parents but also usable for instruction and curriculum adaption for students' need. A portfolio procedure is *tailored* to the purpose for which it will be used, to classroom goals and objectives and to individual student assessment needs. The last characteristic the authors highlight is that an effective portfolio includes assessment of authentic classroom based language tasks that reflect authentic activities used during classroom instruction, thus giving the portfolio an *authentic* characteristic.

Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000) describe nine characteristics of portfolios: collection, range, context richness, delayed evaluation, selection, student-centered control, reflection and self-assessment, growth along specific parameters and development over time. Although the authors consider all of them important, they consider *selection*, *collection* and *reflection* essential as the others can be inferred from them. A portfolio by its nature is collection and generally contains selections of a student's work, not the entire corpus, not the entire output from a course. It typically invites students to display more than one text, in more than one genre, written for more than one audience. According to Hamp-Lyons and Condon (2000), a collection is not a portfolio until it includes students' reflection which engages a teacher or a reader into a conversation about student's strengths, pleasures, weaknesses and non-preferred topics.

Thus, to make the difference clear between simply participating in the portfolio process and utilizing the portfolio process for assessment purposes, it is important to make a distinction between the various types of portfolios. The types of portfolios vary in content dependent on the specific purposes for collecting the data about the students learning process and performance.

2.3.2 Types of Portfolios

There are many definitions for the type of work that belongs to portfolios: works in progress, students' best work, or the work of which they are most proud of, or which show their efforts, progress and achievements (Brown 2004; Bailey 1998). These definitions indicate that there are different types of portfolios- some that focus on progress and some that focus on specific achievements. In literature, the conceptualization on types and categories is shown differently, however, there is "a common theme in determining the type of portfolio to

use" (Carol, 2000:3). All portfolios are to encourage pupils to document the quality of their work, their created products, their individual development and progress in learning.

Even though in literature there are a number of different categorizations in portfolio they all fit into the basic types (Cole and et al., 2000; Brown, 2002). Portfolios can be *classified product / capstone* experience or a record for *process for learning* which might serve different purposes at different times. The *product oriented* or *capstone experience* portfolios are more abbreviated and shortened in their nature and include examples of learner's best work and stand-alone evidence for mastery of program objectives (Cole and et al, 2000; Brown, 2002). They are to certify the learner's strengths, accomplishments and the work's quality and their proficiency of learning tasks rather than the process in which the products were created. An example of a *product-oriented portfolio* is the *showcase portfolio* or *best work portfolio*. Showcase/best work portfolios demonstrate the students' end-of-year accomplishments and show evidence of the best work of learners (Carol, 2000). A main advantage of this type of portfolio is that the learners choose those works to include in their portfolios, which can demonstrate their highest level of learning and achievement. Thus, in using this portfolio, teachers can identify students' interests, insights into students' self-concept, as well as perceived strengths and weaknesses. Carol (2000) mentions three purposes that best work portfolios are used for. The first purpose of product portfolio can serve is to show the *student's achievement* which can be presented at a student-parent conference. The second purpose is *post-secondary admission* where the work samples show the evidence of a range of knowledge, skills, and attitude, and qualities that might be necessary for admission to college and university. The third purpose Carol (2000) highlights is employability where the collection of works focus on specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a particular job or career.

The *process oriented* portfolio, also known as *growth portfolio*, *developmental portfolios,* is to display a student's growth and development over time (Carol, 2000; Cole and et al, 2000). It is considered to be the primary and a more active type of portfolio. Students use the portfolio as a growth instrument which is to demonstrate their performance at the beginning of a learning task. It focuses on the learner's individual learning process which can include initial pieces of work as well as drafts (Cole and et al, 2000). The content shows the learner's cognitive growth and the process approach towards learning gets exemplified (Brown, 2002). The purpose of including the unfinished work is to identify a problem area the learner might have and to reflect on why they have that problem and what they might do about it. Due to this the process of achieving certain goals becomes clear for learners and they can "recognize growth whenever it occurs and can discern the reasons behind that growth" (Carol 2000, p.4). According to Carol (2000), growth portfolios can be used for a number of purposes: knowledge, skills and attitude, teamwork and career. Knowledge portfolios show how the students grew in a certain content area or across several content areas. Skills and attitude portfolios show the students' growth in skills and attitudes in areas such as academic disciplines, social skills, thinking skills and work habits. Teamwork portfolio shows the growth in a different of cooperative and collaborative experiences. Career portfolios help the students in identifying personal strengths related to future career choices.

Although each of the above types of portfolio varies in content, each type can serve a significant purpose in the assessment process and may help to organize the learning practice in the classroom. But how are we going to create a good portfolio and what do we need to be aware of when we introduce it to the class? What are the criteria and the guidelines? As Genesee and Upshur state (1996, p.102), portfolios may have positive effects if they afford students to be actively involved in learning, and engage students in the assessment of their own progress (Walther-Thomas & Brownell 2001, p.226). Nevertheless, portfolios may fail if

they do not have clear guidelines for learners and if they are not well organized (Brown 2004, p. 257). Thus, using portfolios interactively does not happen automatically, but demands systematic planning by teachers (Genessee & Upshur 1996, p.103).

2.3.3 General Guidelines for Using Portfolios

There is no single way of developing or implementing portfolios (Gottlieb 1995, p.12), and some researchers have already examined that teachers go to different degrees of organizational process when implementing portfolios within their classrooms to assess learning (Glazer, 1994; Forgette-Giroux & Simon, 2000). Nevertheless, in literature there exist some general guidelines for using portfolios in classroom settings (Genesee & Upshur, 1996; Brown, 2004; Brown, 2001; Mousavi, 2009). According to Brown (2001), guidelines for using portfolios in a classroom are very much like the guidelines offered for journal writing and successful portfolio development will depend on the following a number of steps and guidelines:

➢   *Getting started* - teachers must take the lead in giving clear directions to students and putting them on the right track. Many students might never have compiled a portfolio before and may be confused about what to do. Thus, in the beginning it is important to negotiate with students on how you will jointly and interactively implement portfolios in your classroom (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). It can be useful to invite someone who has used portfolios "to give clear directions on how to get started" (Brown 2004, p.257) or to show a sample portfolio of a previous student that will help to inspire thoughts on what to include (Brown, 2001).

➢   *What kinds of work and how much work should be kept in portfolios* - the portfolio can contain the work the student has done in class or at home as an assignment or task. They can be any samples of writing, lists of books that have been read, book reports, favorite short stories. Though, portfolios have mostly been associated with written language they can also be

used effectively with oral language by keeping in it audio and tape-recordings of speaking samples (Genesee & Upshur, 1996). There is not a common consensus among experts about how much negotiation there should be between teacher and student over those materials (Brown, 2004). Genesee and Upshur (1996) state that the number of pieces in a portfolio should be limited for practical reasons as it will be difficult to review and assess the portfolio. For including and excluding, any pieces of work there should be certain criteria and these decisions "should be shared by teachers and students so that the students maintain ownership of and responsibility for their portfolios" (Genesee & Upshur, 1996:102).

➤ *When (or how often) to put work in portfolios - portfolios* should be accessible for students any time they want to put or take out pieces from their portfolios. They should have a time set aside for portfolio work and should not feel rushed to gather material and reflect on them (Brown, 2004). Teachers need to review and analyze each student's portfolio on a regular basis.

➤ *Where to keep portfolios* - it is very convenient for the students if they do not carry their portfolios with them. Thus, there should be a common and reachable area for the students to have easy access. In case, there is not a self-contained classroom or a common fixed area to keep the materials the teacher may encourage them to create their own accessible locations and to carry the materials they might need in class (Mousavi, 2009; Brown, 2004; Genesee & Upshur, 1996).

➤ *Who has access to portfolios* - having a common accessible area for portfolios is not only important for students but also for teachers, administrators and parents. Sharing the content of portfolio with other teachers will increase their beneficial effects and will not leave them as "mere collections of school work" (Genesee & Upshur 1996, p. 103). Teachers also need to have easy access to portfolios for systematic review and analysis of each student's portfolio. Making portfolios available for administrators may become as part

of review procedure to decide student placement in a particular program or revise their

grades ((Mousavi, 2009).

If the teachers decide to plan portfolio activity more than one time during the year

they should use a variety of collection tools, collection process and the presentation style

(Chapman and King, 2005). Chapman and King provide a comprehensive table that can be

adapted in order to create novel portfolio assessment experiences (2005, p.130):

Collection Devices	Cover Designs	Page Layout	Gathering Process	Presentation Style
• Folder • Case • Crate • Notebook • Box • X-ray folder • Large envelope • Poster board • Web site • CD-Rom	• Graffiti • Geometric shapes • Topic symbols • Scrapbook ideas • Photos • Drawings • Home page	• Frames • Collages • Illustration • Examples • Scrapbooking • Transparency sleeves • Pictures	• 3-4 examples • Selected passages • Highlights • Summaries • Showcase • Display or exhibit • Web • Interview • Research • Independent practice • Photos	• Oral report • Interview • Conference • Conversant • Circles • Family night • Slide presentation with narration • Talk show • Documentary • Booklet • Diary • Journal

2.3.4 Pros and Cons of Portfolio Assessment

Like any assessment procedure, portfolio assessment tends to have its pros and cons.

The criticisms for portfolio assessment mostly come from the advocates of measurement

philosophy to determine student achievement (Marlow, 2000). These are the issues concerning

the validity and reliability of this type of assessment. Reliability issues include guaranteeing

enough reliability across raters, encouraging objectivity, preventing mechanical errors and

ensuring equal access to resources for all students (Brown & Hudson, 1998).   Validity issues

rise when portfolios are to make decisions about students or to determine the adequacy of

work, development exemplified in the portfolio.

While constructing a portfolio and establishing its criteria, a series of problems can arise. The first question is who will determine the grading criteria and how it will be determined. It is not easy 'to translate' a portfolio into a single score, whereas "the public has become accustomed to single scores, such as those used to describe the results of standardized or norm-referenced test" (Gomez, 2000:4). The second question is who is responsible for deciding what a portfolio will contain and which classroom authentic activities will be included into a portfolio (Brown and Hudson, 1998). The authors discuss some logistical and interpretational issues as well. Logistical issues include time and recourses for implementing portfolio assessment. Teachers need to spend more time in order to read and rate the students' portfolios meanwhile helping students develop their portfolios. It is an intensive and costly labor to design, implement and score portfolio items and teachers spend a large amount of time to developing the scoring criteria and scoring tools (Gomez, 2000). Some of the interpretation issues are grading students' achievements and interpreting them fairly to all students, training teachers for making fair interpretations and later reporting them so that it has been clear for students, parents and administrators.

Advocates of portfolios believe that they have many advantages over traditional assessment as they "provide more complete, thorough, and meaningful information about student performance" (Phye 1997, p.492). All the teachers and administrators have access to the portfolio which enables them to assemble and share information about the effectiveness of particular segments of the curriculum (Mousavi, 2009). The experience of teaching the same level and units in several courses   let the teachers readily compare their experiences and share information of common value. Using portfolio-based assessment for these purposes promotes cooperation rather than competition among the teachers, enhances professional communication and ensures the implementation of needed reforms for curriculum and instructional development (Mousavi 2009, p.517).

Brown and Hudson (1998) clarify the advantages of using portfolios classifying them into three categories: strengthening students' learning, enhancing the teacher's role, and improving testing processes. Portfolios may strengthen the students' learning by focusing learners' attention on the learning process, facilitating practice and revision process, motivating students towards learning (if they are well-planned and present meaningful and interesting activities), fostering collaboration of learners with teachers, and learners with other learners. If well planned, they may also help to motivate the students and increase their involvement in the learning process (Mousavi, 2009:514). Portfolio assessment enhances the teacher's role via providing teachers with a clearer picture of students' language growth, changing their role into a facilitator and providing them with a clear picture about the progress of each individual student (Brown and Hudson, 1998). In this context , the teacher's role is to guide the students as they individually take responsibility for compiling samples of their work for their portfolios (Chapman & King, 2005).

The last category Brown and Hudson discuss is that portfolios might improve the testing process by involving the learners and the teacher in assessment, providing an opportunity for the teacher and the students to work together and for teachers "to observe students using meaningful language to accomplish various authentic tasks in a variety of contexts and situations" (1998:665). This process makes portfolio assessment useful in providing teachers and administrators with real learning outcomes (Lynch and Shaw, 2005). It also makes portfolios academically and professionally valuable and reflective. Lynch and Shaw (2005) state that learners' portfolios represent their learning in the educational program; therefore, a portfolio is a meaningful treatment to the learners' academic achievement and professional preparation (Lynch and Show, 2005).

Another benefit of portfolio is that portfolios may become a management system for collection of learning products, which can be evaluated from time to time not only by

students and teachers but also by parents (Pérez, 1998:327). Parents get involved into a portfolio process by being informed about what and how their children produced. The flexibility of portfolio assessment facilitates communication between teachers and individual students, parents and administrators (Gottlieb, 1995:12), thus becoming an important component of any parent or teacher-student conferences (Walter-Thomas & Brownell, 2001:228). Even though families either prefer grades or tend to know that their children can be assessed only through tests, portfolios may become a way to incorporate the teacher's interactions with families (Benson and Smith, 1998).Traditional parent-teacher conferences are usually tensed on both teachers and parents' sides. However, the case is different when the students organize and lead the conferences with the help of their portfolios (Hebert, 2001).

As the students are involved in organizing and presenting their own portfolios, it encourages them "to take on important new roles in documentation, observation, and review of their learning" thus showing deep analysis of evidence and learning that derives from deep reflection (Zubizarreta 2009, p.xxiv). Zubizarreta (2009) believes that portfolios capture the students' intellectual substance and deep learning in ways that other methods of evaluation cannot. It encourages students to learn the metalanguage necessary for students and teachers to talk about language growth (Brown and Hudson, 1998).

2.3.5 Reflections in Portfolios

The most promising feature of portfolio is the students' reflection that forms the cornerstone of an effective portfolio (Zubizarreta, 2009). Being actively involved in the process of organizing portfolios allows students to participate in the selection and discussion of their work (Genesee and Upshur 1996, p.102). However, before getting involved in that process students need to know some analytical questions which they need to answer in order to organize their portfolios: *What work am I proud of? What are your goals? When do I know I*

have done good work? What does my portfolio reveal about me and my learning style? (Rao 2002, p.116). Rao (2002) states that answering to these kind of questions may activate students' thinking about their progress they made in learning and discover the reasons of their making improvements. This may give the learners an opportunity to reflect on what has been learned and how it has been achieved which is "the heart and the soul of the portfolio process (Carol, 2000:31). Portfolios give students opportunities to reflect on their own progress when they are to choose works to include in their portfolios and to explain their reasons for those inclusions. According to Gottlieb (1995) reflective portfolios let the students to compare their present level of achievement with their prior performance level (p.13). They also reflect when they want to explain "how an included work came to be, and what it reveals about their understanding" (Wormeli, 2006:43).

Reflection is a needed mechanism to assist students and teachers in managing the size of portfolios and injecting more thoughtfulness into the selection process (Hebert, 2001). The main idea is to write down a reason for including that piece of work on an individual tag and attach it to the corresponding sample of student work. This may seem a physical act, however "it stimulates the metacognitive connection of how that particular entry fits into the child's chronology of learning" (Hebert, 2001:81). Hebert states that the reflection tags can serve as 'a metacognitive history' the examination of which over time would assist a child in making significant decisions about future learning and career choice (2001). As a means of reflection, portfolios focus on the student learning process bringing forward the students' perceptions, interpretations and strategies used in acquiring the knowledge they wanted (Rao, 2002). The teachers' role becomes to enhance the students' metacognitive and affective awareness of learning through building and practicing reflective activities in the classroom. Carol (2002) believes that strategies for reflection can be directly taught and practiced. However, in order to reflect meaningfully a set of behaviors and skills are required, the presence of which can

motivate deeper levels of thinking. Thus, Carol (2002) offers five ways for teachers in order to facilitate this process:

1) Define what reflection is and why it is important for learners and their learning.

2) Model the reflection process for students – provide the students with the opportunities to observe others, especially teachers.

3) Provide starting points to build success in reflection - the teacher might find out from students what the most important thing was that they learned from doing the task.

4) Help students move from general reflections to criteria-specific reflections – probe for clarifications in responding to students' initial efforts or encourage feedback to deepen learners' capacity for reflection over time.

5) Provide regular opportunities to practice reflection – the students may not achieve the quality and the depth of reflection if it is done only at the end of portfolio process.

Building the ability to reflect in learners will assist to develop the elements that are fundamental for to meaningful learning and cognitive development. According to Zubizarreta (2009) reflective thinking is the 'linchpin' of lifelong, active learning helping the students discover and realize what, how, and why they learn (2009). In learning portfolios students take responsibility for documenting and interpreting their own learning making their thinking visible. And since metacognition is thinking about thinking, it is directly related to successful achievement on learning tasks at schools and is the key to the effective use of portfolios.

Chapter 3 Methodology

The purpose of this study was to investigate whether and to what extent portfolio assessment influences the learners' achievement and learning process in English. Hence, this chapter presents the setting and the participants of the study, instruments of data collection, procedures, and the analyses of data. The underlying assumption was that portfolio assessment may impact learners' achievement and may positively affect their attitude towards assessment *for* learning.

3.1 Restatement of the Research Questions

The research questions of the present study were as follows:

4. *Does portfolio assessment affect learners' achievement in English?*

5. *Does creating portfolio affect students' learning process?*

6. *To what extent does portfolio completion influence the learners' attitude towards assessment **for** learning?*

In order to find answers to the above questions, quazi-experimental research methods were used. As the participants of the study were not randomly assigned to the experimental treatment, the pre-experimental intact group design was employed. This is the design that most classroom researchers use where the students are placed in the classes on the bases of some criterion, i.e. scores on a placement test (Hatch & Farhady, 1981; Mackey & Gass, 2005). For seeking the answers to the second and the third questions, *correlational* and *survey* research were used, which will be discussed below.

3.2 Setting and Participants

The research was conducted in the Experimental English Classes (EEC), Department of English Programs (DEP) at the American University of Armenia (AUA). The participants

of the study were 26 students placed in two groups. Each group included 13 students: 9 boys and 4 girls in the focus group, and 8 boys and 5 girls in the comparison group. The students' age ranged from 13 to15. They shared the same level of English proficiency as they were placed in those groups based on the placement test results which they took before attending the classes.

3.3 Materials

The textbook which was used for the classes in this research is 'New Parade 3' by Herrera M. and Zanetta T. (2000). It is a "seven-level, communicative language program that features TPR, rhymes, songs, chants, pair work, cooperative learning, and hands-on activities and projects" (Herrea and Zanetta, 2000: i). The set consists of Student Book with pull-out Little Books for more reading in it, Workbook with language activities sections for writing, grammar, and language practice. It also has Audio Program on tape and CD with appealing songs and chants with melodies and voices, plus all the listening activities. 'New Parade' also has Videos and Video Guide, one per level, to surround students with natural language (Herrea and Zanetta, 2000). The textbook consist of nine units each of which focuses on one particular topic. Every three units are covered in one 20 hour term. The first three units ('My Activities', 'Family Activities', 'City and Country') were covered during the current research time period. After each unit students take a progress test (Appendices 1 and 2) based on the content of the materials they studies. (See Appendix 3).

3.4 Instrumentation

Six instruments were used to collect information for the present study. They were:

- Pre- and post-tests administered before and after the treatment

- pre and post instruction attitudinal questionnaires for students

- attitudinal questionnaire for parents

- semi-structured self-assessment checklists

- students' questionnaire on portfolio assessment

- semi-structured interview with students on portfolio assessment

Each instrument is briefly explained below.

3.4.1 Tests

The pre test was developed exclusively for the purpose of this research (Appendix 4). All attempts were made to make this test parallel to the final test (Appendix 5). The posttest is the final test developed by the EEC in the DEP. Both tests consist of three parts: Listening Comprehension, Reading Comprehension and Writing. The time allocation for both tests is 60 minutes and the total score for both is 40.

Part 1 (*Listening Skills*) is designed to measure the students' listening comprehension. It consists of two tasks (A1) and (A2) with 6 items in each with 12 points in total. Task (A1) is designed to measure students' ability to listen and to recognize the basic vocabulary ('daily activities', 'city and country') and structures ('have to', 'simple present') of the three units they covered in one term. The students listen to two passages about two people and mark on their test booklet what these people have to do. Example:

The students hear:

> *Linda lives in a city. She gets up at 7:00. She takes her little brother Tom to school and then walks to her school. She never goes to school by bus. Her mother is usually at work in the afternoons so Linda has to go to the supermarket after school. Linda doesn't like going to the park in the afternoons. She usually goes to the movie theatre with her friends.*

They follow the instruction mentioned on their test booklet:

A1) Listen and mark (√) what Linda and Sarah have to do and mark it on your test booklet. (6 points)

Linda		Sarah	
gets up at 7:00		gets up at 5:40	
takes her little brother to school		feeds the chickens, horses, and cows	

Task (A2) is designed to measure students' ability to make inferences from a situation and to choose the correct answer between two sentences mentioned in their test booklet. Meanwhile, this task attempts to emasure their knowledge of basic vocabulary and structures of the three units they studied. Example:

The students hear:

1. *My grandfather is a farmer. He has to feed the cows before breakfast. After breakfast he waters the plants.*

They follow the instruction mentioned on their test booklet and mark the correct answer:

A2) Listen and choose a or b as the best answer and mark it on your test booklet.

1. a) My grandfather feeds the cows after breakfast.

b) My grandfather eats breakfast after he feeds the cows.

Part 2 (Reading Skills) consist of two tasks with two passages of 99 and 183 words each. Task (B1) is designed to measure students' ability to read and and demonstrate their comprehension of basic vocabulary and expressions. The learners are to read the passage and decide whether the sentences given on the basis of the passage are true or false. There are eight T/F questions which are in the same order as the answers appear in the text. Example:

B1) Read the following passage and choose "T " for true and "F " for false sentences. (8 points)

I go to the post office every week to get a letter from my sister Julia. She is in Australia. Julia is a secretary. She works for a big company, and sometimes visits a lot of different places in Australia. She goes to museums, restaurants and skating rinks. She has an Australian car and usually goes to "Alice Springs" on Sundays. Alice Springs is a small town in the center of Australia. Julia says it is a very beautiful place. She says that she comes back home by plane next week. I hope she brings me many Australian gifts.

1. Julia works in Australia.   T   F

Task (B2) is an information transfer task which is designed to measure the students' ability to read and comprehend the passage and to transfer the information into a chart.

Example: The students see and read:

B2) Read the passage and complete the chart. (9 points)

I have an aunt and an uncle. I write letters to them every week. My aunt Clara lives in an apartment in Boston. She works in a department store. She works from Tuesday to Saturday. She gets up at 7:00 and eats breakfast at 7:30 in the morning. She leaves home at 8:30 and gets to work at 9:00. She comes home at 6:00 in the evening. Clara has a dog. His name is Blackie.

Clara	Eric
She lives in an apartment.	…………………………………..
………………………………………………….	He cuts hair.
She gets up at 7:00.	…………………………………………………….

Part 3 (Writing Skills) consists of 4 tasks with 11 points totally. This part measures students' ability to produce sentences using basic vocabulary and grammatical structures they have covered during the term. Task (C1) and (C2) are picture-cued tasks where the learners

are to produce appropriate vocabulary ("daily routine", "city" and "country") and grammatical features (simple present, adverbs of time etc.) up to the level of a sentence . Task (C1) measures students' ability to produce sentences with grammatical structure of "have to" and vocabulary of daily activities. The students should look at the pictures and write a sentence about what that person "has to do".

The students see and write:

C1) Look at the pictures and write a sentence about what these people "have to do". (3 points)

1. **Tom has to clean up (tide up) his room.**

Task (C2) is designed to measure the students' ability to produce sentences using the structure "before and after". "Simple present" and vocabulary of daily activities.

The students see and write:

*C*2**) Look at the pictures and write a sentence for each about what Tom does before and after school. (2 points)**

before school:

1.   **He brushes his teeth before school.**

Task (C3) is designed to measure the students' ability to produce sentences using basic vocabulary of "city and country" and grammatical structures they have studied. The

students are to write a three-sentence paragraph about where they like to live using the words provided in the box. The answer to this task varies.

The students see and produce:

C3) Where do you like to live? Write 3 sentences about it. Use words in the box. (3 points)

tall buildings	barn	museum
fence	pond	trees
skating rink	house	movie theater
cows	town	city
farm	chicken	horse

I like to live in a ………………………

There ………

Task (C4) is designed to measure the students' ability to produce sentences using the basic vocabulary and grammatical structures they have studied during the term. The students are to answer already provided wh-questions. The answers for this task may vary.

C4) Answer the following questions. (3points)

1.   Who do you usually go to the movies with?
   …… .

All the items of the test were scored equally each having 1 point . The sections of the test are on the bases of the content of the textbook (Appendix, 3).. The performance on the test will be the indication of the students' achievement of the course materials (Farhady, 1985). Though the four skills are focused in the textbook and during the whole course, this test does not assess the learners' speaking skills directly, because of time limitations, administrative difficulties, impracticality and subjectivity. However, students' class

performance and participation, which is mostly in oral form, is taken into account in adjusting some classroom evaluations.

3.4.2 Questionnaires

Three closed-ended questionnaires (students' attitudinal pre and post instruction questionnaires, parents' attitudinal questionnaire, and portfolio questionnaire) were developed to collect information about the students' and parents' attitudes and opinions on assessment *for* learning and portfolio assessment. Pre and post instruction attitudinal questionnaires for students and parents' consisted of 10 items each (See Appendices 6 and 7). Portfolio questionnaire (See Appendix 8) also consisted of 10 questions. Many of the items in the questionnaires related to students' learning, self- reflection and self-assessment issues. They were mostly used to see whether portfolio assessment assisted them in learning or not. Using a Likert type scale, respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the content of the items by marking (√) one of the responses ranging from 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree'.

The main reason for constructing structured questionnaires was "to organize and analyze the data with consistency within a domain of provided responses" (Farhady, 1995:216). Another reason according to Farhady (1995) is that closed form questionnaires are easy to be filled out and does not take a great amount of time from the respondents. A professional translator translated the items of all three questionnaires into Armenian, in order to reduce the possibility of misunderstanding of items (See Appendix 9). To collect feedback about how the instruments worked and whether they achieved the aim they had been designed for, the students' attitudinal questionnaire was piloted at AUA with EEC students. There was no need to pilot parent's attitudinal questionnaire and portfolio questionnaire as the same items were used for constructing both questionnaires with some

modifications. Forty EEC students of different levels participated in the piloting of the questionnaire. Based on the findings of the pilot study, some modifications were made (Appendix 10 and 6).

3.4.3 Self-assessment Checklists

Three self-assessment checklists were designed to collect data on whether portfolio assessment engaged the students in the learning process and assisted them in their learning. Each checklist was designed on the basis of the textbook objectives for each unit separately (Appendices 11, 12 and 13). The first part of the checklist consists of six 'Can do' statements with a 5 point scaling grade 5='Yes, I can'; 4='Yes, mostly'; 3='Maybe'; 2='Not really'; 1=No, I can't'. The second part of the checklist consists of four items with three-point 'smilegram' 3=☺; 2=☺ and 1=☹, asking students to check whether they improved their speaking, writing, reading and listening skills.

3.4.4 Interview

Despite many advantages that questionnaires might have, the main problem with them is that "they take away the freedom with which respondents can answer the questions and limit them to certain choices provided be the researcher" (Farhady, 1995:216). Thus, in order minimize the effect of the disadvantage of the closed questionnaire; a semi structured interview was conducted to obtain information about portfolio assessment.

The items of the portfolio questionnaire were adapted and translated for the interview (See Appendix 14) and asked from the respondents in a consistent and systematic way. The purpose was to provide students with a chance to respond in a way that might be different from the choices mentioned in the questionnaire. The teachers of both groups conducted the interview with the students of focus group. This helped to keep the consistency of the questions given to the students. Only 8 students were interviewed. Since the interviews take

a lot of time, the interviewers did their best to conduct the interview in a pre prepared and planned manner, in order "to elicit information in as short time as possible" (Farhady, 1995). To trace the questions and answers and to collect interview data efficiently, the interviews were recorded (See Appendix 15). This is much less distracting than taking notes, and it also provides a precise and accurate record of the responses (Ary et al, 2002).

3.5 Procedures

3.5.1 Experiment

To answer the first question of the study the pre-experimental method of research was used. The two groups (focus and comparison) involved in the experiment had the classes on the same days, with the same textbook and materials with the same amount of time. The classes lasted one hour per session twice a week for ten weeks. The experiment started on May 18 and finished on July 23. The teacher of the focus group was the researcher herself, whereas for the comparison group the teacher was an MATEFL student who was asked to follow the same lesson plans the researcher prepared for each class. During the experiment in both groups, teachers did the same activates and performed the same tasks. Even extra activities had been planned, agreed upon and used in both groups.

The students of both focus and comparison groups were placed according to the placement test results they took for the EEC classes. However, before starting the course, the pre test was administered to both groups on the same day (May 19).

Portfolio treatment

As mentioned above, two groups were involved in the experiment: focus and comparison. The focus group received the treatment, whereas the comparison group received placebo in order not to create the impression that the focus group was treated differently from

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the comparison group (Farhady, 1995). The students of both groups were introduced to the idea of portfolio and were shown some samples of portfolios. All the students in both groups were given folders for compiling their entries. However, in the comparison group, the teacher did not have any plan or guidelines for portfolio completion and the students put the work they wanted without self-reflection and self-assessment. The teacher neither worked with them on their portfolios nor gave them any feedback. The students of comparison group had their portfolios simply as 'a folder' for their works.

The case was different in the focus group as the students had a clear idea about what they were supposed to do and why they were required to do it. The first step in implementing portfolios in the classroom was to determine the type of portfolio the students would keep; i.e. learning portfolio. Next, after being exposed to several samples of portfolios, the term schedule was introduced (See Appendix 16). All activities that the students had to be involved in were explained in detail. On the very first day of the classes, the students were asked to let their parents know what they were going to do in the classes and to inform them of the purpose of their portfolios. The students were free to take their portfolios home whenever they wanted. Otherwise, they would leave them in one of the drawers of their teacher's office. Before each session, one of them was responsible to take all the portfolios to class and take them back at the end of the class.

3.5.2 Questionnaires

The pre instruction questionnaire was administered before the students classes started. They were given enough time to read all the items and check their responses. If the students had questions concerning the items, they were given explanation by the teacher.

The students were given post instruction questionnaire towards assessment for learning and portfolio questionnaire after they finished their classes and had their portfolio presentations.

The parents' attitudinal questionnaires on assessment for learning were sent home after the classes were over. The students brought them back on the day of their interview.

3.5.3 Self- assessment Checklists

The students were given the self-assessment checklists to complete after they finished each unit and took the progress test. They were told to read each item carefully and be honest while responding to them. After checking all the structured items, they were to take the self-assessment checklists home to fill in "My Diary" section. Though the open ended section of the checklists was not part of data collection, it helped the teacher to improve her instructions and to get a feel of students' strong and weak points on the materials they had covered during each unit.

3.5.4 Interview

The interview time was planned in advance and agreed upon by all the students. Before the interview, the students were told to feel free and to be honest in their answers. However, some of them were a little embarrassed and confused, and could not express their ideas freely. They were told that the interview would be conducted in Armenian and it would be recorded. It took not more than ten minutes to interview each student and the interviewers did their best to conduct it in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere.

3.6 Analysis

The present study contains both quantitative and qualitative data. The data was analyzed through non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis test. The students' pre and post attitudinal

questionnaires, parents' attitudinal questionnaire, students' questionnaire on portfolio assessment and students' self-assessment checklists were analyzed through descriptive statistics. In order to see the relationship between self-assessment checklists scores and the progress tests scores, Spearman's rank order correlation was used.

Cross-case analysis was used to analyze interview data. Cross case analysis involves analyzing the responses of several interviewees according to the topics raised in the interviews (McKay, 2006). According to McKay, this approach is appropriate if we want to highlight particular aspects of research topic (2006). The interview questions were divided into two topics or categories. Each category was analyzed separately in order to group the most common answers.

Chapter 4 Results and Discussion

The present study was carried out to investigate whether and to what extent portfolio assessment (PA) influences learners' achievement and their learning process. It was also aimed at investigating whether PA affects learners and parents' attitude towards assessment *for* learning. For the current study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected through pre and post instructional achievement tests, pre and post instruction attitudinal questionnaires for students and parents, self-assessment checklists, portfolio questionnaires and interviews with students. This chapter presents the results and discussion of the data analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively.

4.1 Analysis of the Quantitative Data

The quantitative data included pre and post instructional achievement tests, pre and post instruction attitudinal questionnaires for students and parents, self-assessment checklists, portfolio questionnaires. For the pre and post instructional achievement tests Kruskal-Wallis Test was used to compare the scores obtained from the performance of the focus and comparison groups. The students' pre and post instruction questionnaires, parents' questionnaires, self-assessment checklists and portfolio questionnaires were analyzed through frequency analysis. Finally, correlation analysis was used to investigate the strength of relationship between self-assessment and progress test scores. The qualitative analysis was applied to the interviews with the students.

4.1.1 Pre- and Post-test Analysis

The first set of data for the study was collected through pre and posttests, which were administered to both focus and comparison groups before and after the treatment. As the

number of participants was small and the distribution of score was not normal, the non-parametric Kruskal-Wallis Tests was used for comparing the two sets of scores obtained from the groups. The Kruskal-Wallis Test is the non-parametric equivalent of one-way between groups analysis of variance. It is a 'between groups' analysis and it allows comparing the mean scores of more than two continuous variables. Scores are converted to ranks and the mean rank for each group is compared (Pallant, 2007; Taylor, 2005; Mackey and Gass, 2005). *Table 1* presents the results of the mean rank of the four sets of scores for both comparison and focus groups. The four groups were formed as two groups taking pretest and two groups taking the posttest. The results suggest that focus group has the highest scores for posttest results (42.12) compared with that of the comparison group which is (34.27).

Table 1 *Mean Ranks of the Groups*

Groups	Tests	N	Mean Rank
Comparison Pre	1	13	12.35
Focus Pre	2	13	17.27
Comparison Post	3	13	34.27
Focus Post	4	13	42.12
	Total	**52**	

Table 2 shows that the observed value of alpha is .00, which is less than the critical alpha level of .05. These results suggest that there is significant difference in pretest and posttest scores across comparison and focus groups.

Table 2 *Kruskal Wallis Test Statistics*

	Grouping
Chi-Square	33.545
df	3
Asymp. Sig	.000

Though we obtained statistically significant results from comparing the mean scores of the study groups, we still do not know exactly where the differences between the groups lie. To find out which group or groups are different from the others, a follow-up Mann-Whitney U test was needed. The Mann-Whitney U Test is the nonparametric equivalent of post hoc comparison t-test for set of data where the distribution of scores does not meet the normality assumption of the parametric tests. This test converts the scores on the continuous variable to ranks across the two groups. To make sure that the expected and observed differences between the groups are in the direction of the research questions, several comparisons were made to answer the research questions:

Comparison 1. Were the comparison and focus groups similar at the outset of the study? In other words, was there any significant difference between the performance of the comparison and focus groups before the experiment?

To answer this question, Mann-Whitney U test was performed between the mean scores of focus and comparison groups on pretest. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3 *Mann-Whitney Test of Pre-test Scores*

	Pre-test
Mann-Whitney U	69.50
Wilcoxon W	160.50
Z	-.773
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.440

Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.448[a]

As the table pictures, the Z value is -. 773 with a significance level of p=.44. The probability value is way larger than to .05. This means that the difference between the mean scores of the comparison and focus groups is not significant. Thus, it can be concluded that the two groups were similar regarding language ability, and any difference on post test scores can be attributed to the effectiveness of instruction.

Comparison 2. Did the comparison group significantly improve their language ability due to instruction?

To perform this comparison, another Man Whitney U test was performed on the pretest and posttest scores of the comparison group on the pre and post test achievement test. Table 4 displays the result of analysis of pre and post tests scores of comparison groups. It has the Z value of -4.35 with significance level of p=.000. The probability value is less than .05 which shows a significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of comparison group. This implies that the students in the comparison group benefited from the instruction to a great extent.

Table 4 *Mann-Whitney Test of Comparison Group*

	Pretest - Posttest
Mann-Whitney U	.000
Wilcoxon W	91.000
Z	-4.347
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

	Pretest-Posttest
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.000[a]

Comparison 3. Did the focus group significantly improve their language ability due to instruction?

As *Table 5* depicts the Z value of -3.81 with significance level of p=.00 which is less than 05. Here again the results show significant difference between the pretest and posttest scores of focus groups.

Table 5 *Mann-Whitney Test of Focus Group*

	Pretest-Posttest
Mann-Whitney U	10.50
Wilcoxon W	101.50
Z	-3.814
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.000[a]

The results of *Table 4*and *5* show that in both comparison and control group there had been progress and the performance of both groups have significantly improved. This may show that the instruction affected the learners' studying and they had improved their knowledge of English. However, in order to see whether portfolio assessment, the main variable in this research, had any impact on the performance of the focus group and whether there is a significant difference between the comparison and focus groups after the experiment, the scores of posttest of two groups were compared through Mann-Whitney U

Test. *Table 6* shows the comparison of the same two groups after the treatment where we see different results.

Table 6 *Mann-Whitney Test of Post-test Scores*

	Post-test
Mann-Whitney U	40.00
Wilcoxon W	131.00
Z	-2.307
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.021
Exact Sig. [2*(1-tailed Sig.)]	.022[a]

The Z value is -2.307 with a significance level of p=.02. Here the probability value is less than .05 which implies statistically significant difference between comparison and focus groups. Thus, the analysis of pre and post test data rejects the null hypothesis of the study and shows that portfolio assessment had positive effect on the students' performance.

4.1.2 Pre- and Post-instruction Questionnaires

The students' pre and post instruction attitudinal questionnaires consisted of 10 items with closed answers (See Appendix 6). Thirteen students of the focus group completed the questionnaires before and after the treatment. They were given enough time to read all items carefully and ask questions in advance (if they had any). *Table 7* presents the extent of change in students' attitude towards assessment for learning before and after implementing portfolio assessment.

Table 7 *The Results of Pre and Post Instruction Attitudinal Questionnaires for Students*

Pre-post Instruction Questionnaire Items	Strongly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Pre	*Post*	Pre	*Post*	Pre	*Post*	Pre	*Post*
1. Tests show my learning growth and achievement.	15%	*12%*	70%	*27%*	15%	*30%*		*29%*
2. Grades show my learning growth and achievement.	23%	*16%*	61%	*27%*	16%	*36%*		*21%*
3. I am able to self-assess my own work.		*23%*	31%	*76%*	31%		38%	
4. I am able to self-reflect on my own work.		*39%*	15%	*61%*	46%		38%	
5. I am able to explain my strengths and weaknesses in learning English.		*15%*	39%	*84%*	23%		39%	
6. I am aware of my learning growth.	85%	*24%*		*76%*	15%			
7. I am responsible for my own learning.	8%	*30%*	85%	*60%*		*10%*	8%	
8. I have clear evidence of my learning growth.	69%	*85%*		*15%*	31%			
9. I discuss my learning problems with my teacher.		*66%*	27%	*24%*	23%	*10%*	50%	
10. I am involved in my learning growth.		*30%*	41%	*52%*	23%	*18%*	31%	

As the results are shown in *Table 6*, the students' attitude has changed considerably after going through portfolio completion. Before the treatment, 15% and 70% of students thought that tests would show their learning growth and achievement, whereas after the treatment 30% and29% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that the achievement and the learning growth could be shown only by tests. Portfolio treatment had also affected the students' attitude towards grades they get to show their learning growth and achievement. More than 70% of students agreed or strongly agreed that the grades depict their learning

achievement. However this number decreased and about 57% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed that a single grade can show their learning progress and development.

Before the experiment most of the students were not able to self-assess and to self-reflect upon their work. However, after the treatment, almost all the students, (from 23% to-76% for self –assessment and from 39%to -61% for self-reflection) agreed that they developed self-reflection and self-assessment skills. This may indicate that the students have been involved in the process of learning, and compiling portfolio helped them to develop the ability of self-reflection and self-assessment. Before portfolio implementation, only 39% and 23% of students were able to explain their strengths and weaknesses in learning English, whereas these percentages increased up to 85% and more after the experiment. Item 7 shows that before the treatment almost 93% of students had the feeling of responsibility toward their own learning. The noticeable change here is that before the experiment only 8% of students strongly agreed upon this issue. However, after the experiment, the number increased and 30% of the students strongly believed that they felt responsible for their own learning.

We have quite different results about the students having clear evidence of their learning growth. In pre instruction questionnaire only 69% of respondents agreed that they have clear evidence of their learning growth, whereas in post instruction, the percentage increased up to more than 85%.

Portfolio implementation strongly influenced learners' attitude towards discussing their learning problems with their teacher. Before the implementation of the PA, only 27% agreed upon this issue, while after the treatment more than 70% of learners thought that they discussed their problems with their teacher. Though before the treatment almost 60% of the students responded that they were involved in their learning, after the treatment almost 80% of students agreed or strongly agreed n this issue.

Summarizing the results of pre and post instruction questionnaires, it can be claimed that portfolio assessment considerably influenced learners' attitude towards assessment *for* learning. It involved the learners in the learning process and developed their abilities of self-assessment and self-reflection. The students became conscious of their learning growth and were able to understand their strong and weak points in their learning of the language.

4.1.3 Parents' Attitudinal Questionnaire

Parents' attitudinal questionnaire (See Appendix 7) consisted of the same 10 items as those of the students' questionnaires. The questionnaires were sent home by the students and were requested back after a week. Thirteen parents completed the questionnaires. *Figure 1* and *Figure 2* presents the results of the analysis of the parents' attitude towards assessment for learning. Not only the students' responses to attitudinal questionnaire showed that they were involved and were aware of their leaning growth, or they could understand and explain their problems in learning the language, but also parents' responses revealed the same positive attitude towards their children's learning. *Figure 1* shows the means of responses of six questionnaire items (Items 5-10) which were related to students' learning.

Figure 1 *Means of Parents' Responses*
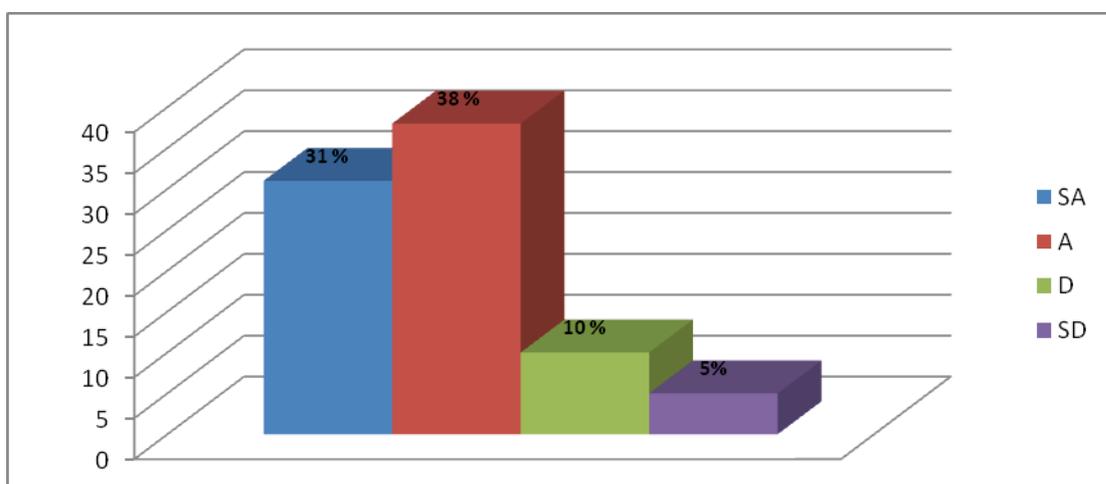
It can be concluded from the graph that 31% and 38% of parents strongly agreed or agreed that their children were involved in the learning process and were aware of their learning growth. They agreed that their children were able to explain their strengths and weaknesses of learning the language and were responsible for their own learning. Their children had clear evidence of their learning and they discussed their learning problems with their teacher.

Figure 2 provides the picture of frequency of parents' responses to the other four items of questionnaire.

Figure 2 *Frequency of Parents' Responses*
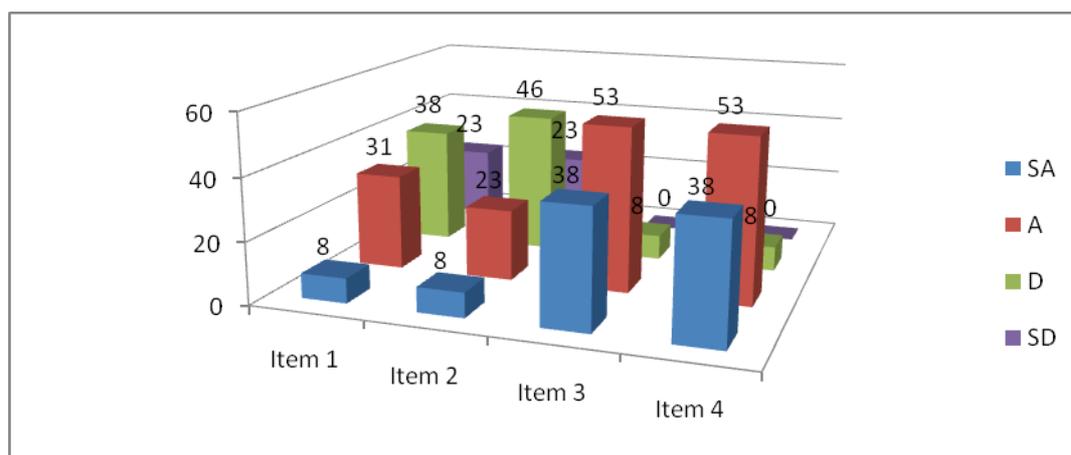
In response to item *"Test show my child's learning growth and achievement"*, (38%, and 23%) of the parents disagreed or strongly disagreed and only 39% of them agreed that tests could show their children's learning growth and achievement. The number of disagreed responses increased up to 46% and 23% when responding to Item 2 *"Grades show my child's learning growth and achievement"*. After portfolio completion almost 85% of parents felt that, their children were able to self-assess and self-reflect upon their work. Thus, the results of parents' responses may be interpreted as showing their positive attitude towards the assessment for learning.

4.1.4 Self-assessment Checklists

The next set of data was gathered from semi-structured self-assessment checklists (See Appendices 11, 12 and 13) and progress tests. The purpose of developing the checklists was to see whether the students really had any progress from their own perspectives and from teacher's point of view. The self-assessment checklists consisted of 6 "Can do" statements based on the students' learning objectives for each unit. There were four more items to check whether the students had improved their reading, speaking, listening and writing skills. The students were asked to check (√) the items after taking the progress tests which were given after finishing each unit. There was also a "Diary" part in the self-assessment checklists, which was not part of data collection. They were assigned to do this part as a home assignment.

Figure 3 shows the students' report on their progress within 20 sessions of instruction. The red line shows the growth or progress according to self-assessment checklists on the scale of one to five and the blue line shows the growth according to the progress tests. The progress tests scores were converted onto the scale of hundred for comparison purposes.

Figure 3 *Students' Learning Progress*
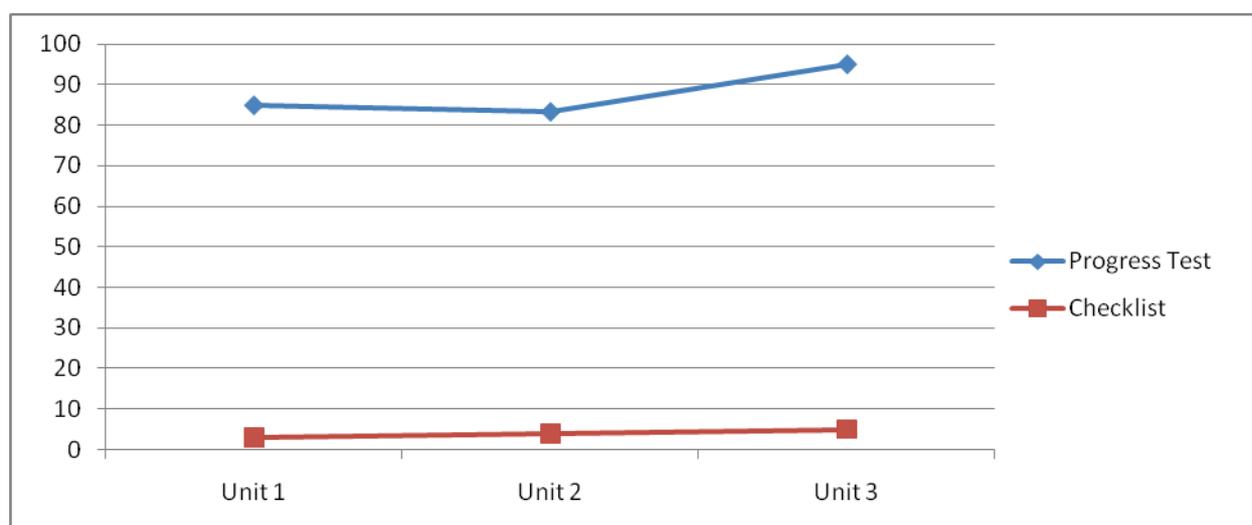
Finally, to investigate the relationship between self assessment scores and achievement scores, correlation analysis was used to see the strength of the relationship of two sets of scores. The relationship between the self-assessment scores and progress test scores was calculated using Spearman -Brown's rank order correlation technique. The results showed that there was a moderate positive correlation between the two variables, rho=.64, rho=.86, rho=.71. This means that students were well quite self conscious and aware of the extent of their improvement.

4.1.5 Portfolio Questionnaire

Portfolio questionnaire consisted of 10 items with closed optional answers for the students to check (√). It was administered after the students had their portfolio. The items were translated into Armenian and it made the completion process smooth for students. They were given enough time to read the items and fill in the questionnaire.

Figure 4 provides the picture of the means of the students' responses to portfolio questionnaire items, which were mainly related to learning (Item 1-7, See Appendix 8).

Figure 4 Means of the Responses
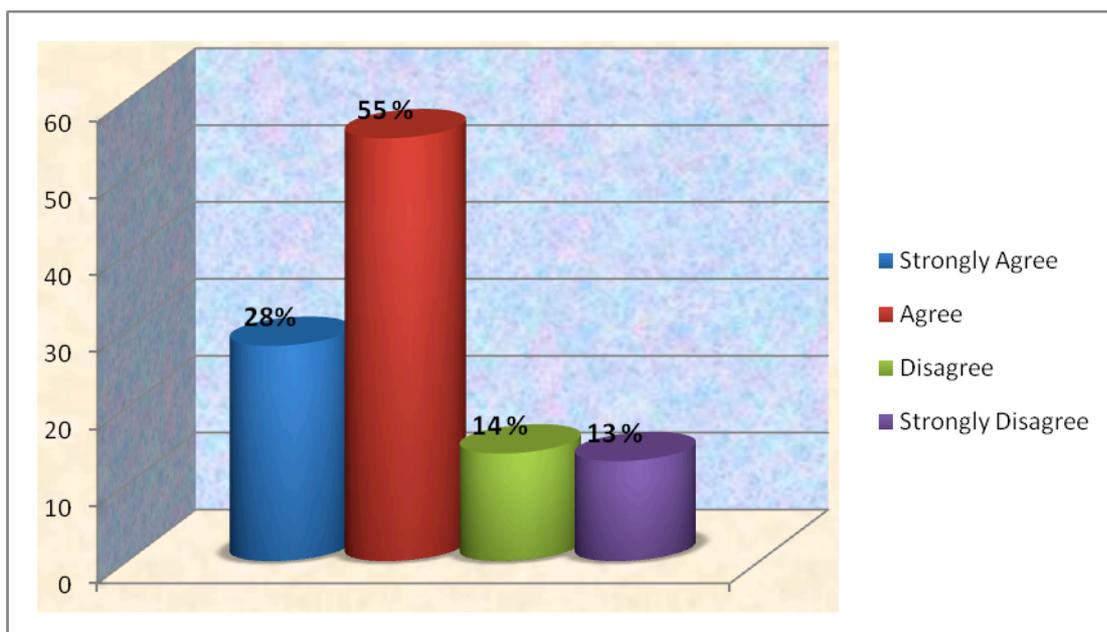
More than 80% of students felt that working on portfolios was a useful and beneficial learning experience for them as it helped them to control and to feel responsible for their learning. It also helped them realize what some of the problems they had in learning English. They believed that portfolios reflected their learning progress of English and could serve as an indication of their learning. As it is shown in *Figure 4*, only 14% and 13% of students disagreed or strongly disagreed upon these issues. Figure 5 shows the frequency of the responses to the last three items of portfolio questionnaire items. They were:

"I find reasonable the time and efforts I spent on compiling my portfolio

"Portfolio process has encouraged self-reflection",

"Portfolio assessment is a more effective assessment method than traditional assessment method"

Figure 5 *Frequency of Responses of Three Items*
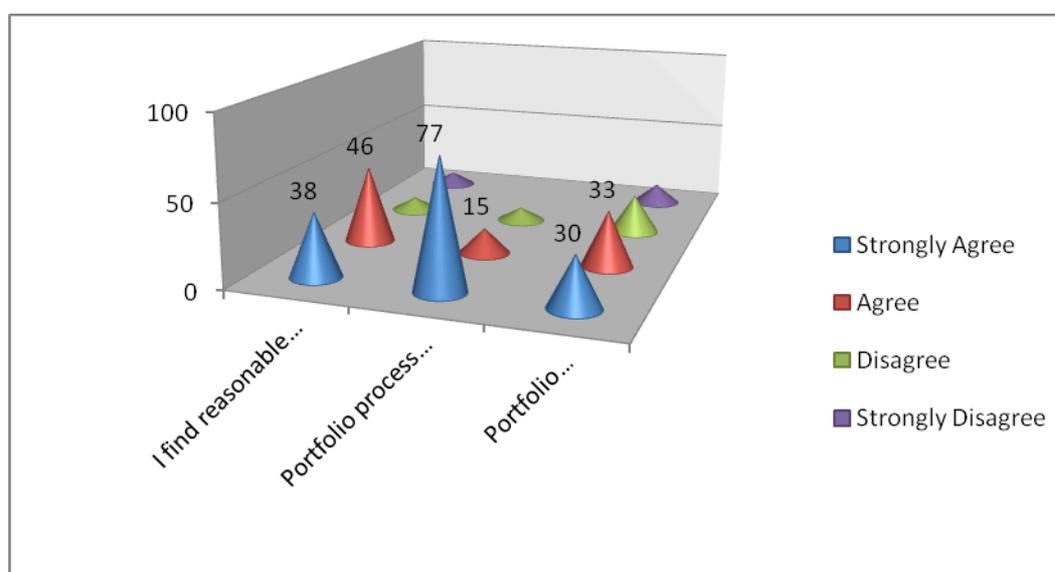
More than 80% of students found the time and efforts they spent on compiling their portfolios reasonable , and only 16% of them expressed their disagreement. Almost the same

number of students felt that portfolio had encouraged their self-reflection ability. According to the results, more than 60% of the students believed that portfolio assessment was a more effective assessment method than traditional assessment methods.

4. 2 Analysis of the Qualitative Data

The qualitative data was gathered through semi-structured interview, which was conducted with the students of focus group after the treatment. The interview was recorded (See Appendix 15) and the transcriptions were translated into English. After having collected all interview data, a content analysis was done which involved identifying key topics or categories in data.

4.2.1 Analysis of the Interview Data

Cross-case analysis was used to analyze interview data. This technique involves analyzing the responses of several interviewees according to the topics raised in the interviews (McKay, 2006). According to McKay, this approach is appropriate if we want to highlight particular aspects of the data (2006). The interview items were divided into two topics or categories. Each category was analyzed separately in order to collect the most common answers related to the topics.

First of all, it should be mentioned that to start the interview and to relief the tension of the interviewees, the interviewer asked an opening question "Was portfolio interesting to you?" which followed with the question "Why?" The follow-up question enabled the interviewees to freely express their opinions and attitudes towards portfolio assessment. The main purpose of the opening question was to elicit information about the   students' attitude towards portfolio assessment. These opening questions were classified under the category of "Attitude". All eight students expressed their positive attitude towards compiling portfolio bringing various reasons for it. They claimed that portfolio helped them to learn better and

made their learning process more interesting. Most of them liked their portfolios because it was the representation of their hard work. Some stated that P enabled them to go back and reflect on what they had done or what they had missed in their studying. They found the time and the efforts they spent on compiling their portfolios reasonable and believed that their portfolios might become a document of what they have learned. Students' attitude towards the portfolio was assessed around the following issues as well: a) their perception of usefulness of portfolios and b) their preference of portfolios over traditional assessment methods.

In responding to the question asking if portfolio was a useful and beneficial learning experience for them, almost all the students gave a positive response. Two students highlighted the teacher's role in portfolio process stating that her guidance and help facilitated their portfolio completion process and made it more effective. In answering to the question about their preference of portfolios over traditional assessment methods, only one students' answer was "definitely yes". The other seven students thought that portfolio can become a supplement to their grades and tests at school. They believed that grades or tests show their knowledge of English, whereas portfolios show how they got that knowledge.

The largest category of "Learning" closed most of the interview questions (See Appendix 14, Questions 1-7). Almost all the students felt that doing portfolio was really a useful and beneficial learning experience for them and it helped them to control their learning. As they were to organize and update the content of their portfolio, they started feeling more responsible for their learning. Its content showed not only the knowledge they got during the term but also how hard they worked. Thus, most of them claimed that portfolio is a good picture of not only *what they learned* (i.e. achievement) but also how they learned (i.e. learning process). Reflecting upon the entries they had chosen for the content of their portfolios helped some of them to understand what types of problems they had in learning

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English. One of the students highlights the teacher's factor, mentioning that without her help it would have been difficult for them to work with their portfolios. Many of the students believed that their portfolios can become an indication of their learning, and if any other teacher went through their portfolios, he or she would see how well or badly that student had studied, what a bad handwriting that student had, how many classes had he missed or what a responsible student he was.

4.3 Discussion

One of the main purposes of this study was to determine whether portfolio assessment affects students' achievement or not. The results of pre and post tests analysis revealed that portfolio assessment positively influences the students' achievement.

Through a purposeful collection of materials assembled over a period of time learners provide evidence of skills and abilities as they relate to the learners' field of interest (Moya and O'Malley, 1994). Portfolios document the students' performance and growth over time through the collection of their work samples. However, being involved in merely selecting and sorting the work in a folder does not seem satisfactory "as it cuts short the potential of that collection as an effective tool for assessment and instruction" (Carol, 2000:31). As part of the portfolio process, students are asked to think about their weaknesses and strengths in language learning. Learner reflection in a portfolio assessment process makes an important contribution to the triangulation of information (Huerta-Macias, 1995). The students are asked to select any work they want; go through it and explain why they have chosen that artifact. The students' reflection provides feedback to teachers enabling them to be more aware of their students' abilities, interests, potentials, efforts and problems in the language learning process. The teacher responds to learners' reflection by providing suggestions for revision or by offering solutions for improving their language abilities. This kind of teacher

feedback encourages the learners to become more aware of their strengths and weaknesses and provides them with a beneficial effect on their learning and attitudes.

Reflecting upon their work, the learners develop their metacognitive abilities that helps them make their learning meaningful (Carol, 2000). Reflection also gives the students the opportunity to improve their abilities by understanding their strong and weak sides of learning the language. They also develop the ability to self- assess and self-evaluate their work based on the existing pieces of evidence. According to Carol (2000) self-evaluation is an important part of metacognition and it occurs when students make judgments about their achievement and react to their judgments. In its turn, metocognition assists individuals in managing and coordinating all the information in order to achieve their goals. The results of pre and post instruction questionnaire showed that the students developed the skill of self-reflection and self-assessment. The results of self-assessment checklists support the studies that portfolio assessment may promote student self-determination (Ezell, Klein, & Ezell-Powell, 1999; Moya & O'Malley, 1994). According to Ezell, et al. (1999), the portfolio assessment process closely correlates with the components of self determination including self-esteem, self-advocacy, goal setting, making decisions and choices, self-reflection, and self-assessment. This supports the idea that through portfolio process you can teach your students how to meaningfully reflect on their work and think about their thinking (Carol, 2001). The capacity to review and reflect on one's own learning processes and practices is essential to the portfolio process. Thus, it can be stated that portfolio assessment incorporates three important learning processes: self-evaluation, reflective practice and real conversation between the teacher and the students.

According to Scott (2001) portfolios constitute reflections and document both teaching and learning over time, giving opportunities to teachers to get involved in the analysis of what they have done along with their students. The learners' reflections enhance

the teachers' understanding of their learners and enable the teachers to know and understand their learners (Carol, 2001).

Information gained from portfolios can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction and student performance as well as to develop instructional goals and objectives based on documentation provided by the student in the portfolio. This directly links the instruction with assessment and becomes of great value both for teachers and students (O'Malley and Pierce, 1991; Paulson *et al.*, 1991).

Furthermore, the impact of portfolio assessment was obvious on changing the students' attitude towards traditional way of assessment. They believe that the grades and the tests are not the only way of showing their achievement or learning. According to the students' comments, traditional testing only depicts what they know, but fail to show how they learned what they know. Portfolios give a clear picture of the students' learning process and growth, which in turn, provides useful information about the individual learning styles and strategies of the students. This property of the portfolio makes it a useful assessment for learning tool by diagnosing the potential problems the students may have in the learning process and offering solutions to those problems.

Chapter 5 Conclusion

This chapter presents the summary of the findings and points out the limitations faced while conducting the current study. It also discusses the implications and applications and offers suggestions for further research. This study was set up to address the following questions:

7. *Does portfolio assessment affect learners' achievement in English?*

8. *Does the process of creating portfolio affect students' learning process?*

9. *To what extent does portfolio completion influence the learners' attitude towards assessment* for *learning?*

5.1 Findings

The study aimed at finding out the effect of portfolio assessment on learners' achievement in the English language. It also intended to find out the extent to which the process of creating portfolio might influence students' learning and to might influence learners and parents' attitude towards assessment for learning. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected within the framework of the study. The analysis of quantitative data (pre and post instruction tests) revealed statistical significance between pre and posttests of experimental group suggesting that there is a positive relationship between portfolio assessment and students' achievement. The data analysis and results of the study also showed an important and promising fact that portfolio assessment has impact on learners' achievement. The findings further indicated that portfolio assessment, which was pleasantly received by the participants, contributed to learners' achievement and their sense of responsibility towards monitoring their progress.

It should be noted that a portfolio is far more than just a simple procedure of gathering samples of student work and expect that it will change the climate of the classroom and the nature of teacher–student interactions. Compiling portfolios, to be effective, requires a very detailed and carefully developed plan on the part of teachers, which will allow them to assess students' learning styles. It will also enhance teachers' ability to communicate with parents about students' learning and evaluate both students and parents' attitude towards their children's learning development and achievement.

An important property of portfolios is that they permit instruction and assessment to be woven together (O'Malley and Pierce, 1991; Paulson *et al*., 1991). Portfolio assessment is a strategy that can be used for collecting data to inform the instructional planning process, meanwhile gathering information about the learner's developmental progress (Lynch & Struewing, 2001).

To conclude, it may be claimed that portfolio assessment enhances students' achievement in language learning, as their participation in the portfolio design and content selection provides them with a sense of being important, responsible, and in control of their own actions. It also involves the students in the assessment process of their own learning and develops positive attitude towards assessment for learning.

5.2 Limitations

No study is perfect. The first and the major limitation of this study was that the researcher faced many novel situations during the process of portfolio assessment to which no ready-made plan existed. Forgette-Giroux and Simon state that "novice teachers tend to loosely plan and schedule a rather unfocused collection of best work across subjects" (2000:4). Thus, it is of utmost importance for teachers and administrators who are involved in the portfolio implementation process to have an adequate training and prior plans (Brown and Hudson, 1998; Gussie & William, 1999).

The next limitation of the study was that parents' attitudinal questionnaires were not administered before the treatment. The results of their questionnaires would have given a chance to study the development of parents' attitude towards assessment for learning. This is very important because most parents are used to monitoring their children's home study behavior. Changing their attitude towards learners' autonomy could have been a significant finding of this project.

Another limitation of this study was that the portfolio presentations had not been videotaped and the parents and other teachers or administrators were not invited to be present in students' portfolio presentations. The script of videotapes could have added strong support to the findings of this study as the students expressed their feelings, frustrations, difficulties they had undergone while compiling their portfolios. This might have created a better picture for parents and other researchers to see what the students had achieved during the course.

Finally, the study included only 26 participants and the findings of the research are too limited to be generalized to other cases.

5.3 Implications

The results of the present study seem to support the contribution of assessment of learners' achievement and their positive attitude towards assessment for learning. Portfolio assessment can be used as an integral part of learning as it gives the students opportunities to understand and overcome their weaknesses in learning the language. As part of the portfolio process, teachers can create a file to record students' needs, goals, weaknesses and strengths in language learning. This may provide an ongoing assessment of students' needs for evaluation and planning for instructional strategies. Portfolios can be documents for parent-teacher-student conferences as it is a useful way to communicate with parents and students

(Walter-Thomas & Brownwell, 2001). It may also become an effective means of showing the students' progress to other teachers and administrators.

Furthermore, portfolios are complementary approaches for reviewing student language development and academic progress. They represent authentic and continuous assessment of students' progress; possibilities for integrating assessment with instruction; assessment of learning processes and higher-order thinking skills; and a collaborative approach to assessment that enables teachers and students to interact in the teaching/ learning process (O'Malley and Pierce, 1991).

5.4 Further Research

Taking into account the above-mentioned limitations, it would be revealing to carry out further research on the area of portfolio assessment engaging a large number of participants for the results to be generalized to a larger population.

In the portfolio literature, teacher portfolios are seen as a powerful reflective tool of professional and personal teacher growth and development (Scott, 2001). However, I believe that the students' portfolios can become better tools for teachers' self-evaluation and monitoring of teaching and learning strategies and styles their students have. It would have been beneficial to reveal to what extent students' portfolio assessment may affect reflective teaching.

It might be reasonable to investigate to what extent portfolio assessment shows the learners' proficiency level or their educational and socio cultural backgrounds.

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Appendix 1

American University of Armenia
Department of English Programs
Experimental English Classes

Class: C7   Test 1/ Form B

Name: _____   Time: 30 ms.

Section I. Listening Skills (7 points)

A1) Listen and mark the correct picture. (4 points)
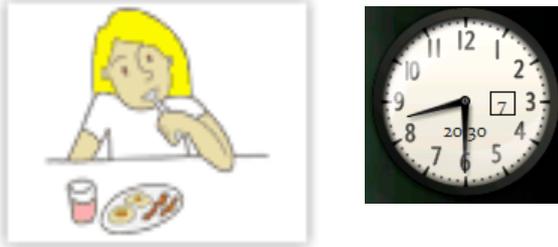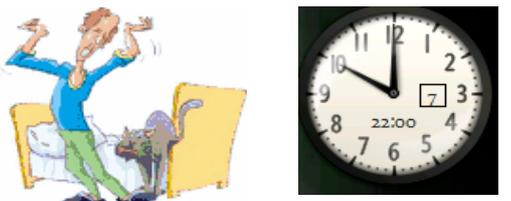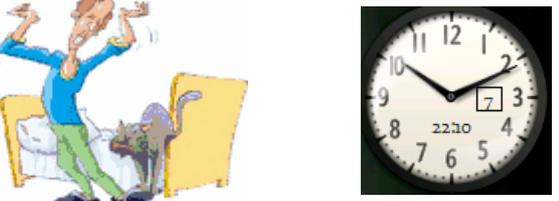
1	*(a)*	*(b)*
2	*(a)*	*(b)*
3	*(a)*	*(b)*
4		

| | (a) | |
| | | |

A2) Listen and choose the correct sentence. (3 points)
   Example:
   a) Sue combs her hair before 7:00.
   b) Sue combs her hair after 7:00. √

   1. a) Mary eats dinner at 9:00.
      b) Mary eats dinner at 7:30.

   2. a) I go to school at 7:15.
      b) I go to school at 7:50.

   3. a) Mike combs his hair before 7.
      b) Mike combs his hair after 7.

Section II. Reading Skills (8 points)
B1) Read the following passage and choose T for *'true"* or F for *'false' sentences.*
      (5 points)

On Fridays I don't go to school. I get up at 8:00. After I brush my teeth and get dressed, I eat my breakfast at 9:00. Then, I go to the park with my father, my mother, and my sister. I like parks. I play soccer with my father. My mother and my sister walk on the grass. At 12:00 we take a bus home, and we eat our lunch. After lunch my sister and I watch TV and my father reads a book. I like Fridays and I like my family.

1. On Fridays I go to school at 8:00.   T   F
2. I brush my teeth after I eat breakfast.   T   F
3. I go to the park after 9:00.   T   F
4. We eat lunch before 12:00.   T   F
5. My father reads a book after lunch.   T   F

B2) Read the passage and fill in the chart. (3 points)

I'm Lucy. I get up at 6:30. I get dressed and brush my teeth before breakfast. I eat my breakfast at 7:30. I go to school after breakfast. I study English at school. I come home at 1:30 and eat lunch. After Lunch I go to the park and play with my friends. I do my homework at 6:00. I go to bed after I watch TV with my father.

Before School	get up ………………………, ………………………, ………………………	6:30 6:35-7:25 7:30
After School	go to the park ……………………… ………………………, ……………………… ………………………….	3:00 6:00 7:00-9:00

Section III. Writing (5 points)

C1) Look at the chart below and write complete answers to the questions about Tom. (3 points)

Morning		Afternoon	
6:45	*10:30*	*3:30*	*9:50*
Ride his bike	*Read a book*	*Play soccer*	*Go to bed*

1. What does Tom do before he reads a book?

……………………………………………………………………………….

2. What does Tom do after he plays soccer?

……………………………………………………………………………….

3. What time does Tom play soccer?

……………………………………………………………………………….

C2) Answer the following questions about yourself. (2 points)

1. What do you do after school?

……………………………………………………………………………….

2. What time do you go to bed?

……………………………………………………………………………….

☺Good Luck

Total: _____ /20

Class: C7

Test 1/Form B
Time: 30 ms.

Audio Sheet

> To the reader:
>
> 1. Please read at the normal rate of speech.
>
> 2. Give 15 seconds for each item.

Section I. Listening Skills (7 points)

A1) Listen and mark the correct picture. (4points)

1. I eat my breakfast at 8:30.
2. I brush my teeth at 7:00.
3. I go to bed at 10:00.
4. I do my homework at 5:30.

A2) Listen and choose the correct sentence. (3 points)

Example: Sue combs her hair at 7:15.

1. Mary eats dinner after 8:30.
2. I take the bus to school at 7:50.
3. Mike combs his hair at 6:45.

Answer Key

Section I. Listening Skills (7 points)
A1) Listen and mark the correct picture. (4 points)
1. Picture (b)
2. Picture (a)
3. Picture (a)
4. Picture (b)

A2) Listen and choose the correct sentence. (3 points)

1. a
2. b
3. a

Section II. Reading Skills (8 points)

B1) Read the following passage and choose T for *true"* or F for *'false'*
    sentences. (5 points)

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. F
5. T

B2) Read the passage and fill in the chart. (3 points)

Before School	get up get dressed, brush my teeth, eat breakfast	6:30 6:35-7:25 7:30
After School	go to the park play with my friends do homework, watch TV, go to bed	3:00 6:00 7:00-9:00

Section III. Writing (5 points)

C1) Look at the chart below and write complete answers to the questions
    about Tom. (3 points)

1. Tom/He rides his bike.
2. Tom (He) goes to bed.
3. Tom/He plays soccer at 3:30

C2) Answer the following questions about yourself. (2 points)
Answers will vary.

Appendix 2

American University of Armenia
Department of English Programs
Experimental English Classes

Class: C7   Test 2/ Form B

Name: _____   Time: 40 ms.

Section I. Listening Skills (10 points)

A1) Listen and mark the appropriate picture. (5 points)

1	a)	b)	c)
2	a)	b)	c)
3	a)	b)	c)
4	a)	b)	c)
5		b)	c)

A2) Listen and choose (a) or (b) as the correct sentence. (5 points)

1. a) My sister is a nurse.
    b) My sister is a dentist.

2. a) Mr. Brown is a coach.

b) Mr. Brown is a teacher.

3. a) My mother goes to work before 7:00.
   b) My mother gets up before 7:00.

4. a) My father works on Fridays.
   b) Firefighters sometimes work on Fridays.

5. a) I always go to the post office to get my mail.
   b) The mail carrier brings my mails every Saturday.

Section II. Reading Skills (12 points)

B1) Read the following passage and choose T for *'true"* or F for *'false'* sentences. (6 points)

It is Sunday. Sue does not usually get up early on Sundays. She stays in bed until 9 or 10. She gets up very late. She looks out of the window. It's dark outside. "What a day! It's raining again" she says. Then the telephone rings. It's her aunt, Lucy. She sometimes goes shopping with Sue on Sundays.
Her aunt says, "I'm coming by train to see you, Sue. What are you doing?"
Sue answers, "I'm eating breakfast"
Her aunt says, "Oh! Do you always get up very late? It is 1:00."

|		
1. Sue usually gets up late on Sundays.	T	F
2. Sue eats breakfast after 9 or 10 on Sundays.	T	F
3. When the telephone rings Sue is in her bed.	T	F
4. Lucy sometimes goes shopping with Sue on Sundays.	T	F
5. Sue's aunt is coming by plane to see her.	T	F
6. Sue is eating breakfast at 10 this Sunday.	T	F

B2) Read the passage and write a sentence according to each picture. Use the word bank. (6 points)

I'm George Thomson. I'm nine years old. I have a brother. His name is Tom. We usually get up at 6:00 every morning. My father is a teacher and he teaches English. My mother is a nurse. She always gets up very early. She makes breakfast ready. We eat breakfast at 7:00. After breakfast, I get dressed. I usually go to school with my father. We leave home at 7:45. We never take the bus to school. The buses are full at this time. We walk to school. We get to school before 8:00.

word bank

always

1. We usually get up at 6:00 every morning.

2. ………………………………………………………………………………………… .

3. …………………………………………………………………………………………………

4.………………………………………………………………………………………………… .

5.………………………………………………………………………………………………… .

6.…… .

7.……….

Section III. Writing (8 points)

C1) Look at the following pictures and write a sentence about their jobs.
(4points)

1. She is a nurse. She……………………………………………….

2. He is a mail career. He …………………………………………….

3. He is a firefighter. ……………………………………………… .

4. She is a secretary. ……………………………………………… .

C2) Look at the pictures and write a sentence about each picture. Use *always, usually, sometimes, or never*. (2 points)
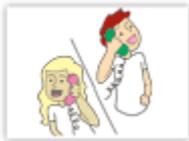
Word bank

always

usually

. .

1. Tom……………………………………………………………………

2. Kate ………………………………………………………………………………….

C3) Write a complete answer to the following questions. (2 points)

1. Do you always take the bus to school?

……………………………………………………………………….

2. Do you sometimes go shopping with your parents?

……………………………………………………………………………….   Good Luck ☺

Total: _____ / 30

American University of Armenia
Department of English Programs
Experimental English Classes

Audio Sheet

> **To the reader:**
>
> 1. Please read at the normal rate of speech.
>
> 2. Give 15 seconds for each item.

Section I. Listening Skills (10 points)

A1) Listen to the sentences and mark the related picture.
    (5 points)

1. He is a doctor.
2. I am a pilot.
3. Jack is a barber.
4. He is a dentist.
5. Mike is a waiter.

A2) Listen and choose (a) or (b) as the correct sentence. (5 points)

1. My sister sometimes works at night. She helps sick people.
2. I like Mr. Brown. He teaches English in our school.
3. My mother gets up at 6:00 and goes to work at 7:30.
4. My father is a firefighter. He sometimes goes to work on Fridays.
5. Every Saturday I go to the post office to get my mails.

Answer Keys

A1) Listen to the sentences and mark the related picture.   (5 points)
1. a
2. c
3. b
4. c
5. a

A2) Listen and choose (a) or (b) as the correct sentence. (5 points)
1. a
2. b
3. b
4. b
5. b

B1) Read the following passage and choose T for *'true"* or F for *'false'* sentences. (6 points)
1. T
2. F
3. F
4. T
5. F
6. F

B2) Read the passage and write a sentence according to each picture. Use the word bank. (6 points)

2. My father is a teacher and he teaches English
3. My mother is a nurse.
4. After breakfast I get dressed.
5. I usually go to school with my father.
6. We leave home at 7:45.
7. We never take the bus to school.

C1) Look at the following pictures and write a sentence about their jobs. (4points)

Answers will vary

C2) Look at the pictures and write a sentence about them. Use *always, usually, sometimes, or never.* (2 points)
1. Tom always plays the guitar.
2. Kate sometimes talks/ speaks on the phone.

C3) Write a complete answer to the following questions. (2 points)

Answers will vary.