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Action Research on Influence of Portfolio Assessment on Students' Attitudes and Teacher's

Beliefs in the Armenian EFL context

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By

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Abstract

This mixed-method action research examined the influence of portfolio assessment on students' opinions, attitudes, and overall learning process and discovered the teacher's beliefs and attitudes towards it. The research was conducted at a local language center that provides English language lessons to students of different ages. One group of students and one teacher were selected to participate in the study. The teacher implemented portfolio assessment in the EFL classroom. The current action research was conducted in two cycles: the first one involved writing and vocabulary portfolios and the second one included a speaking portfolio. The data were obtained through two student surveys, two teacher interviews, and continuous researcher observations; students' works included in portfolios were also used as a data collection source. The data were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively using thematic coding. The data was demonstrated with the help of qualitative and quantitative tables and figures.

The study results reveal that the majority of students demonstrated positive attitudes toward portfolio practice and the learning process. Portfolios helped them develop responsibility for their learning, improve their writing and speaking skills, and enlarge their vocabulary bank. Although the two boys expressed reluctant attitudes towards portfolio practice and the general EFL learning process, the researcher's observations and teacher interviews indicate better and more functional performance for the whole group. In addition, the teacher also changed her doubting attitude towards portfolio assessment and became more patient with continuous formative assessment tasks. Overall, portfolios demonstrated a beneficial influence on students' attitudes and the teacher's beliefs.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary of Figures

Summary of tables

Chapter One: Introduction

In the last several decades, foreign language pedagogy has experienced noticeable changes. More attention has been paid to learners' participation and progress rather than teaching approaches in EFL classrooms. With formative assessment gaining tremendous popularity in EFL classrooms, portfolio assessment has received particular recognition from language teachers and researchers in many countries as a beneficial tool for instruction and assessment. Literature suggests that the formative assessment provides opportunities to reach and educate every student independently through continual assessment and instruction. Portfolios, as a method of formative assessment, can make students become more active in assessment and the learning process as they can monitor and follow their own learning (Saygılı, 2021; Pinchok and Brandt, 2009: Tibbitt, 2020).

Using the term "assessment" in education, we understand the wide range of teachers' techniques or tools to evaluate students' learning achievements or educational needs. "Assessment is a central feature of teaching and the curriculum. It powerfully frames how students learn and what students achieve" (David Boud et al., 2010, p. 1). Portfolios are considered one of the most practical tools in classroom assessment.

Portfolio assessment is one of the varieties of formative assessment used in EFL classrooms to improve several aspects of language learning. It is presented as a continuous process of students' evaluation during learning, providing feedback, and improving the curriculum. Barton and Collins (2004) first analyzed the possibilities of portfolio assessment in education while working for the Teacher Assessment Project in the late 1980s. They stated that portfolio assessment is a continuous, interdependent assessment that enthusiastically engages

both the teacher and the student in active and effective learning. In the environment of portfolio assessment, both teachers and students discover some new responsibilities and find themselves in new roles. Portfolios are essential in developing a student-centered classroom. Correctly designed portfolios allow students to become intensively engaged in the learning process by taking part in educational preparation and assessment. Portfolios assist students in developing strong responsibility towards the learning process and help teachers create interest in the teaching process.

1.2 Problem statement

Portfolio assessment is prevalent among EFL teachers in many countries. However, according to anecdotal evidence, formative assessment, particularly portfolio assessment, is not yet a norm in EFL classrooms in Armenia. Accordingly, the number of studies presenting evidence of the influence of portfolio assessment in the local context is considerably low. Consequently, this research is conducted to gather empirical evidence on the role of portfolio assessment on students' attitudes and teachers' beliefs in the given local context where this kind of assessment is not widely spread. This research also aims to understand how it could be implemented to benefit one particular language center, one group of students, and one teacher.

1.3 Significance of the study

The current study is significant in contributing to the local EFL teacher; also, it can be beneficial for her students and their parents, who will experience new learning practices. The study's primary purpose is to investigate the influence of portfolio assessment on the local

students' attitudes towards their EFL learning experience and to explore particular teacher's beliefs towards portfolio assessment.

1.4 Research Questions

The research will address the following questions:

1. *What opinions and attitudes do EFL learners have about the influence of portfolio assessment on their learning and overall learning experience?*

2. *What is the influence of portfolio assessment on the teachers' beliefs and assessment practices in the classroom?*

Chapter Two: Literature Review

This study investigates the influence of portfolio assessment on the learning process of EFL (English as a foreign language) students in an Armenian EFL context, the teacher's beliefs towards portfolio assessment, and the impact of portfolios on her teaching practice. The research is conducted in a local English language center.

This literature review will first define the concept of assessment by briefly presenting the difference between formative and summative assessments and then outline the role of formative assessment in language teaching and learning, leaning on the viewpoints of several similar studies and experts in the field. Accordingly, supported by the overview of numerous related studies, this chapter will then discuss portfolios as a method of formative assessment, later pointing out the effect of portfolio assessment on students' learning in the EFL context. Moreover, it will present benefits and bring examples of some upside effects of this type of assessment. Finally, the study will concentrate on teachers' beliefs about portfolio assessment and its influence on teaching practice.

2.1 Assessment

There are several methods in the classroom that evaluate students' learning achievements and help provide essential feedback for further improvement. According to Frank (2012), "assessment is how we identify our learners' needs, document their progress, and determine how we are doing as teachers and planners" (p. 32). Accordingly, Frank suggests that assessment is a continual action that assists both teachers and learners in determining whether the teaching-learning process is successfully integrated and highlights the gaps. In addition, it evaluates that

the learners' educational needs are properly satisfied, and their learning process is developing progressively, consistently, and accurately.

In pedagogical literature, assessment is considered a key term for testing and all remaining forms of assessment, whereas testing is a term for one particular form of assessment (Clapham, 2000; Haley & Austin, 2004; Leung & Lewkowicz, 2006). Michael Scriven (1967) developed the terms formative and summative assessments. Assessment is considered summative if carried out at the end of the learning process, mainly with the help of tests or quizzes. Scriven (1967) argues that all assessments can be accepted as summative. In other words, they have the potential to provide a summative function, but only some of them have the additional capability of providing formative functions. Assessment can also be formative if performed during the learning process and evaluates how much a student learns throughout the course. Garrison and Ehringhaus (2007) accept that formative assessment provides the necessary information to regulate teaching and learning during classroom practice. In this regard, formative assessment provides both teachers and students with information about students' achievements and whether appropriate adjustments must be made during the course. These adjustments ensure that students achieve particular learning outcomes. Generally speaking, formative assessment is a part of the instructional process. Overall, summative assessment is traditionally specified as 'assessment of learning;' however, formative assessment is recognized as 'assessment for learning.' Consequently, different researchers and experts in the related field distinguish 'assessment of learning' and 'assessment for learning' (Arter, 2003; Black & William, 1988).

2.2 Formative assessment

Bloom (1968) introduced formative assessment as a foundation of Learning for Mastery and pointed out that formative assessment can play a fundamental role in improving classroom curriculum. There exist several definitions of formative assessment provided by different authors. According to McManus (2006), formative assessment is a process used by teachers and students during classroom instruction that provides feedback to regulate teaching and learning to improve students' achievements in the classroom. Formative assessment is defined as an assessment that is implemented during instructional processes with the intention of improving teaching or learning practice (Shepard et al., 2005). Formative assessment has been defined by Black and Wiliam, 2010, as "activities undertaken by teachers—and by their students in assessing themselves— that provide information to be used as feedback to modify teaching and learning activities" (p. 82).

Formative assessment can be spontaneous and planned (Cook, 2009). Spontaneous formative assessments include random activities, such as follows: when a teacher elicits the error in the student's native language during class and checks the student's understanding; when a teacher asks a student to provide an example of a presented idea or topic; or when question-and-answer sessions are performed during the lesson. These activities provide real-time information about student learning. Planned formative assessment involves activities such as quizzes and homework exercises assigned to assess student progress. Types of formative assessment include informal observations by the teacher, pop quizzes, dialogue journals, diagnostic tests, and analysis of student work, including tests, worksheets, quizzes, homework, portfolios, and collections of students' work.

Formative assessment has been widely used in several educational systems over the past 20 years as a type of regular assessment. Connie and Brookhart (2019) demonstrate the metaphor of a windmill as an example that will help visualize the formative assessment process and its influence on learning in the EFL classroom. The authors said that "just as a windmill intentionally harnesses the power of moving air to generate energy, the formative assessment process helps students intentionally harness the workings of their minds to generate motivation to learn" (p. 5). The authors also suggest that engaged in the formative assessment process, students successfully understand and use learning targets, set their own learning goals, select essential learning methods, and evaluate and control their learning progress. Moreover, as students develop themselves into more self-confident and proficient learners, they become more energized to learn and progressively carry on more complicated tasks controlling their effort and actions when dealing with new learning challenges.

Pinchok and Brandt (2009) and Tibbitt (2020) state that formative assessment means assessing students in the periods when they set specific goals rather than waiting to implement an assessment when the lesson plan requires that a goal should have been reached. Using assessment in a current way measures student learning and can also help guide it. With the help of formative assessment, teachers use several tools and approaches to ascertain students' knowledge, identify missing points in their understanding and plan future learning in the EFL classroom. The authors also compromise that the formative assessment provides opportunities to reach and educate every student independently through continual assessment and instruction. The learning process is enriched with benefits from cross-cultural awareness and the application of the students' diverse identities. This fact is fundamental for formative assessment; it performs

like a process in which multiple students' knowledge, interests, and experiences drive instruction and enable teaching through students' strengths rather than their weaknesses.

A few studies examined the topic of formative assessment in the EFL context in Armenia (Balasanyan, 2010; Torosyan, 2011) and numerous studies abroad. The qualitative study by Torosyan (2011) in the Armenian EFL context among elementary level EFL students aged 8-11 investigated the effect of formative assessment in EFL classrooms. The comparative study examined two groups of EFL students: one was the treatment group, and the other was the comparison group. The author conducted research by implementing several types of formative assessment (including portfolio assessment) in an EFL classroom to find out to what extent formative assessment could influence the EFL learners' vocabulary enrichment. The results revealed that most students had positive attitudes towards implementing formative assessment. Specifically, the study found that the students liked almost all the implemented formative assessment techniques and thought they might be a good instrument for identifying their vocabulary knowledge. Moreover, it helped them remember new words or phrases more effectively and efficiently.

The mix-method study conducted by Balasanyan (2011) in the Armenian EFL context investigated students' attitudes towards formative assessment. The mentioned study was carried out to examine whether there is any relationship between the implementation of formative assessment and students' achievement in language learning. It was also aimed at determining what attitude students have towards formative assessment. For the study, both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered. There were 33 EFL participants whose ages ranged from 10-15years old. The participants studied at a well-known afterschool English program and had an intermediate English language proficiency level. The study included experimental and control

groups and different types of formative assessments such as self-assessment, peer-assessment, portfolio assessment, etc. The results received throughout the study demonstrated that the students' attitudes towards formative assessment were positive. According to the author's implications, formative assessment helps students become better language learners when they are engaged in what they are learning and how they are learning it.

The subsequent mixed-method study by Sargsyan (2015), related to formative assessment, was conducted in the Armenian EFL context, and explored the reliability of peer assessment through oral presentations. The participants were 15 EFL learners from American University of Armenia, afterschool English program, having intermediate English proficiency levels. Their age varied from 14-16 years old. The study particularly focused on peer assessment and its Achilles' heel- reliability. Pre- and post-interviews are conducted with the participant teacher who teaches in that classroom. The students were introduced to the peer assessment method and were asked to give individual presentations during seven lessons. The results revealed that the peer assessment of oral presentations in the classroom was not accurate as the students had difficulties with using the grading rubric. Also, as the researcher notes, they graded their peer subjectively positive as they did not want to spoil their relationships in class. However, the researcher also concluded that the teacher participating in the research had a good attitude towards peer assessment and was ready to implement it again in her further pedagogical practice. For students benefits, the practice allowed to deliver topic-related presentations and act as teachers assessing their peers. Most of the students considered peer assessment useful and interesting. Though their grading was not accurate.

The mixed-method, a quasi-experimental study by Margaryan (2015), had a connection with formative assessment and aimed to investigate to what extent the self-assessment of twenty EFL young learners of widely known afterschool English program. It correlated with the teacher assessment, also aimed to find out how self-assessment reflects on students' learning. The study included control and treatment groups: the treatment group received a self-assessment in the form of checklists with "I Can" statements. The control group did not receive any additional treatment, just attended the classes regularly. The researcher concluded that this type of formative assessment had some beneficial influence on learning. Specifically, besides reflecting on their knowledge, the students also became more active and engaged in the learning process; further, the researcher found a strong relationship between student and teacher assessments.

Furthermore, mixed-method research on formative assessment was conducted by Adourian (2014) in the Armenian context to explore how feasible and helpful self-assessment is in an adult EFL classroom. The researcher was the teacher himself. The participants' age ranged from 18-40years old, and their English proficiency level was intermediate. The data were gathered through observations, tests, and self-assessment grids. The results demonstrated that self-assessment grids helped raise participants' awareness and taught them to rely on themselves to achieve their planned progress. The regular use of the self-assessment also had an apparent beneficial impact on their testing performance.

Furthermore, formative assessment received a respectful attitude abroad and was accepted positively, having a beneficial influence both on the students and the teachers participating in the research. It helped improve students' learning, assisted the teachers in their pedagogical practices, and helped develop strong teacher-student relationships. Lastly, it is worth

mentioning that the studies exploring formative assessment in Armenia are mainly limited to the context of one language school, which provides limited evidence for the topic of investigation.

2.3 Portfolios as a method of formative assessment

One of the methods being widely used in performing a formative assessment is portfolio assessment (Birgin & Baki, 2009; Hamilton, 2011). Portfolios are considered methods of formative assessment in the EFL context, which help students follow their own performance in the classroom and achieve new learning goals without specifically concentrating on them. According to OECD (2005), they provide an opportunity for written interaction between teacher and student and allow students to reflect on their learning process.

According to Chandio and Jafferi (2015), portfolios are a collection of students' work over a particular period to show their performance in the classroom, development as a student, and achievements in certain areas. For creating a proper portfolio, the students are supposed to arrange and clearly describe their success during the learning process and to be able to efficiently describe what they have learned in the classroom, demonstrating specific evidence for their completed assignments. The portfolio assessment approach provides a structure for learning that remains for a longer time. Consequently, the responsibility of delivering mastery of concepts transfers from the teachers to the learners. Yang (2003) defines a portfolio as a collection of students' work, demonstrating their effort, progress, and achievement in their learning and their consideration of the materials discussed in the portfolio.

As Lynch and Shaw (2005) state, the process of choosing and gathering components, the nature of the final portfolio, feedback, and evaluating procedures should demonstrate some essential features to be considered as formative assessment. While there are several different

ways of formative assessments, they commonly require the student to respond in ways that involve integrated language use. For example, a teacher might observe students while doing authentic classroom assignments and evaluate their ability to use language or mental skills using a checklist or a particular description of student performance. In the educational sphere, portfolios for learning and assessment play significant roles and are found in all stages of education and professional development (Klenowski, 2002). They play a crucial role in almost any discussion of 'alternative or formative in assessment' or 'assessment for learning' designs (Lynch, 2003).

2.4 The influence of Portfolio assessment on students' learning in the EFL context

Numerous studies show different impacts of portfolio assessment as a formative assessment tool in the EFL context, though most demonstrate a positive impact on learning. Nevertheless, some evidence shows students' negative attitudes towards portfolio assessment, such as the following (Phothongsunan, 2020; Lo, 2010; Mokhataria, 2015; Harmer, 2007). Educators and researchers must consider the efforts, time, costs, and administration of portfolio assessment. Many researchers often indicate that the implementation of a portfolio is certainly time-consuming. The findings of a mixed-method study by Phothongsunan (2020) conducted among Thai university students revealed that students and teachers are aware of the upsides of collecting a portfolio in their courses. Though, they think that portfolio assessment comes with additional burdens and duties for their lessons. Also, there are difficulties in the implementation of portfolio assessment, such as issues connected with reliability (Coşkun, 2015), portfolios being time-consuming (Sofiah & Pratolo, 2020), and not being easy to assess (Cirneanu et al., 2009). In her action research, Lo (2010) mentions that the workload of reading, grading, and

answering students' questions was tremendous. She also had to spend much time locating answers to the students' questions she could not answer. According to Lo (2010), "Despite the greatly reduced number of questions, the reading and grading load was still very heavy" (p. 87). One crucial fact is that students kept their portfolios without any pressure and anxiety. The drawback of portfolio assessment mentioned by Harmer (2007) indicates that portfolios require more time from the teacher than the traditional classroom assessment method. In addition, as Mokhataria (2015) ensures, the downside of using a portfolio assessment is the parents' or community's potential disapproval of an unfamiliar system. Accordingly, it is extremely important to have a good explanation and understanding of how portfolios may be beneficial for the EFL classroom.

Nevertheless, several studies have been completed in different countries (China, Armenia, Iran) pointing out the positive effect on students learning (Balasanyan, 2011; Ghoorchaei et al., 2010; Xiang et al., 2021). Thereby, the mix-method study conducted by Balasanyan (2011) in the Armenian EFL context investigated students' attitudes towards formative assessment, including portfolio assessment. The students were asked to keep a portfolio of their works as it could serve as a guide for further actions and issues related to revision. Furthermore, based on the study results, it became apparent that 65% of the students found the implementation of portfolios useful. And only about 28% expressed a negative attitude. The boys expressed a negative attitude towards portfolio assessment. The author considers that they were not motivated to keep portfolios and found it uncomfortable to carry out the large portfolio folder. The results of qualitative action research present another benefit of maintaining a portfolio by Goctu (2016), which demonstrates that writing and assessing portfolios are beneficial to students. Even if participants faced some issues during the portfolio

assessment process, they learned a lot from solving those issues and taking responsibility for their learning process. The students of the portfolio-based class mainly benefited from the reflective nature of the task. They had the opportunity to reflect on their writings and follow and correct their mistakes in class.

Portfolios can show a broad view of the learning process for students and enable continuous feedback for them (Charoenchai, Phuseeorn, & Phengsawat, 2015; Zhang, 2009). Besides, portfolios also empower students to develop a self-assessment for their studies and learning (Gavriel, 2013). Portfolios also can provide visual and ongoing proof of students' skills, interests, strengths, achievements, and progress in a specific period. Also, portfolios being the orderly collection of the students' studies, help assess students as a whole (Birgin and Baki, 2009). The comparative research findings conducted by Ghoorchaei et al. (2010) investigating the effect of portfolio assessment on Iranian EFL students revealed that portfolio assessment encourages the group of students' using portfolios to learn more than the group without using a portfolio. It is also suggested by Hashemian and Fadaei (2013) that portfolios can noticeably improve the learners' self-reliance and inspire them to become more actively engaged in the language learning process.

As portfolio assessment has become essential in foreign language learning, especially in terms of writing, researchers have started to investigate the effectiveness of this method on writing skills in the last few decades. Specifically, in the EFL context, much research explored portfolios' effectiveness. For example, the study conducted by Aly (2002) in the Cairo context using pretest and posttest design demonstrated that a group that used portfolio assessment performed higher writing performance compared to the parallel group. In addition, another study by Apple and Shimo (2004) on Japanese learners using a self-reported questionnaire found that

portfolio assessment positively affected their writing. It also was seriously preferable among Japanese EFL learners. Saygılı (2021) investigated the effects of portfolio assessment on students' academic writing abilities. The study design was pre-post experimental, also to measure the participants' attitudes, the researcher used an attitude test after the portfolio practice. After 12 weeks of investigation, results revealed that the participants' writing skills evolved. Consequently, compared to the control group involved in the study, the experimental group received higher marks on the skill test. Even though the participants considered the process complicated at first, at the final stage of the study, portfolios made the students become more active both in assessment and the learning process as they had the chance to monitor and follow their own learning.

The findings of recent studies by Xiang et al. (2021) in a Chinese university and Wang and He (2020) demonstrate that students benefited from the assessment-oriented instruction in terms of their development, writing efficiency, and quality, successfully practiced assessment and feedback literacy. Moreover, portfolios are innovative and valuable tools for teaching and evaluation. They offer a holistic picture of the learners' learning process and progress, encourage them to take full responsibility for their learning, and foster their autonomy. In addition, D'Angelo (2012) conducted a comparable study in the context of higher learning in the EFL classroom. D'Angelo found that portfolio assessment helped guide and motivate students in their writing. As portfolios display objective evidence of students' knowledge and beliefs, they have become essential for assessing language learning (Ozturk & Cecen, 2007). Jones and Shelton (2006) state a stable connection between portfolios and classroom instruction, teaching/learning relations, and human development. For that matter, this method can help the students to develop self-monitoring abilities, self-correction, and self-assessment. Moreover, the positive,

cooperative, stress-free atmosphere of portfolio classes can strengthen the students' performance and improve their overall learning and grades.

More studies on participants' opinions on portfolios and their influence on their writing were performed by Aydın (2010) and Tabatabaei and Assefi (2012). The research conducted by Aydın (2010) explored the EFL writers' opinions on keeping portfolios. The data collection results showed that participants' writing skills related to vocabulary, grammar, and cohesion-coherence developed; also, they learned how to write by paying more attention to their error correction. Another experimental design study conducted by Tabatabaei and Assefi (2012) concentrated on EFL learners' writing sub-skills such as; elaboration, organization, vocabulary, and focus. The results demonstrated that portfolios played an influential role in improving writing skills and sub-skills.

The experimental research by Boumediene et al. (2018) supports the results by Xiang et al. (2021) and He (2020) and suggests that portfolio assessment could change the students' negative attitudes who used some learning skills and strategies after implementation of portfolio assessment. Moreover, students become able to reflect on their writing process, demonstrating planning, drafting, revising, and editing, which they didn't do before using portfolio assessment.

The action research conducted by Tyas (2020) among 30 undergraduate students in Indonesia examined the effect of portfolio assessment on their essay writing. The study was conducted only in one cycle. It found that the majority of the students agree that clearly stated criteria that help evaluate their learning process and product writing can motivate them to complete portfolio assessments to achieve better scores in essay writing class. The results by Tyas (2020) support the findings of the other studies conducted by Khonbi and Sadeghi (2012); Romova and Andrew (2011) that discovered the portfolio assessment was truly beneficial to

students' learning. The studies found that the practice of portfolio assessment can encourage the students to set goals and help them improve their writing performance and competence.

Based on the mixed-method study findings by Salim Al-Naibi et al. (2019), revising the objectives and purpose of portfolio assessment in the classroom is necessary. It may evoke a better attitude toward portfolios both from teachers and students as they provide a helpful signal for improvements in the practice of portfolio assessment implemented in the EFL context. In support of the study mentioned above, Lam (2016), investigating assessment as learning, stated that in the longer term, collaboration in constructing portfolios can also boost self-reflective skills via an enlarged focus on some linguistic features and rhetorical patterns. It can promote the need to learn how to give feedback from students to their peers and/or respond to commentary from teachers. The author also compared traditional classroom essay writing assessments and portfolio-based writing assessments and suggested that students acquire good writing elements through regular assessments provided in portfolio-based writing. Correspondingly, the qualitative research by Abdul Aziz and Yusoff (2015) stated that using a portfolio in a classroom of a rural school is beneficial and effective in helping students to improve writing instruction in the English Language.

Moreover, 'With the help of portfolios, students see the tangible outcome of their efforts that eventually leads to a solid sense of accomplishment. A portfolio record of their progress can boost confidence, which is evident in some of the students' speeches' (Alam & Aktar, 2019, p. 161). Portfolios provide new hope in the progress of second-language writing acquisition. An educational portfolio helps students to state their ideas and thoughts effectively and more confidently.

Literature on English as a Second Language (ESL) continuously highlights the necessity

of integration of ESL students in their writing process. Martinez (2020) states that implementing

the portfolio assessment empowers students to demonstrate their progress in a formative way.

Nevertheless, the usage of portfolios in the classroom is beneficial for both the improvement in

writing among ESL learners and the assessment of their learning as the teacher, and the students

can individualize and personalize their academic cooperation

The results of the qualitative research by Manukyan (2010) among 26 Armenian EFL

learners of the same English language proficiency level at a widely known afterschool English

program investigated the effect of portfolio assessment on learners' achievements. The results

demonstrate that portfolio assessment was crucial in changing the students' attitude towards the

traditional way of assessment. The students believed that the traditional tests and grades were not

the only way of assessing their learning results and achievement. Students' comments revealed

that standard tests only demonstrate their current knowledge and do not show how they gained it.

In contrast, portfolios provide a clear picture of the student's learning process and achievements,

offering necessary information about the student's learning strategies and individual learning

styles. Yazici (2021) conducted a mixed-method study on students' attitudes towards portfolio

assessment, including 49 EFL learners. Regarding the students' attitudes towards the advantages

of portfolio assessment, participants said that portfolio assessment improves their vocabulary and

writing skills. Another benefit mentioned by participants related to active participation in

language learning, also portfolio assessment assisted them in noticing their strengths and

weaknesses in the language learning process.

The literature review suggests that many experts in the related field discuss, explore and

provide strong evidence that the effects of portfolio assessment are beneficial both on students'

learning and teachers' pedagogical practice in EFL classrooms.

2.5 Teachers' beliefs towards portfolio assessment and its impact on their teaching practice

Teachers' beliefs and understandings of portfolio assessment may vary depending on their educational and pedagogical practice. Moreover, portfolio assessment can have multiple impacts on their teaching practice. It is essential to be familiar with the basic steps of creating and implementing portfolios in the classroom to perform a better approach related to portfolio assessment. Most teachers are familiar with this type of formative assessment. There is a framework for designing and implementing portfolio assessments in EFL classrooms for effective learning, which can help teachers. Delett et al. (2001) suggest a specific framework to help teachers consistently design and implement portfolio assessments. The framework provides the following seven steps and can be applied in any instructional context:

Step 1 - plan the assessment purpose

Step 2 - determine portfolio outcomes

Step 3 - match classroom tasks to outcomes

Step 4 - determine the organization of the portfolio

Step 5 - establish criteria for assessment

Step 6 - monitor the portfolio process

Step 7 - evaluate the portfolio process (Delett et al., 2001, p. 560).

Chan (2008) conducted quantitative research on teachers' beliefs about different assessments and revealed that EFL teachers had strong beliefs related to several assessment methods, including portfolio assessment. According to the questionnaire data, the majority of participants considered multiple assessments more practical than the traditional classroom tests. Most of the EFL teachers correctly understood the concept of the portfolio assessment. They also knew how to use it in the classroom. In addition, they were familiar with the ways how to guide

students in collecting proper materials for portfolio assessment. Also, many of the participants agreed that they were able to set criteria for assessing students' language performance. Besides, many participants stated that portfolio assessment might improve students' self-assessment ability. Nevertheless, most EFL teachers considered the portfolio practice time-consuming and usually avoided implementing it.

Moreover, portfolio assessment may have different impacts on every teacher's pedagogical practice (Arumugham, 2019; Zhang, 2009). Zhang (2009) has conducted mixed-method research among English teachers on implementing portfolio assessment in the Chinese context. A questionnaire and interviews were used in the process of data collection. As a result, quantitative data revealed that teachers had been actively using portfolios as an assessment tool to monitor their students' learning process. In contrast, qualitative data demonstrate that teachers prefer to use portfolios as they can single out students' abilities and portfolios show students' learning evidence. The results of qualitative research exploring a group of teachers' perceptions of portfolio assessment and how they have used it in classroom teaching and learning reveal that teachers understood portfolio as a collection of students' work, as a teaching and feedback tool, also as a learning and grading tool (Arumugham, 2019). Compared to other countries that mainly use portfolios for two primary purposes, such as teaching and learning, the Malaysian context refers to portfolios for grading purposes.

Additional teacher perceptions investigated the beliefs of EFL teachers on portfolio assessment by Cheng (1997) and Jalilzahed and Yeganehpour (2021). They have discussed portfolio as a valuable tool for teaching English as a foreign language. These studies demonstrate that portfolios can be considered tools necessary for learning improvement to benefit teachers' classroom practices and pedagogical goals. Accordingly, Cheng's findings revealed that teachers'

beliefs about foreign language learning had a crucial impact on students' anxiety about foreign language learning. Chinese teachers seemed to emphasize the importance of excellent pronunciation, immediate error correction, vocabulary memorization, and grammar rules. Because teachers' beliefs about language teaching are influential and have a significant impact, the author encourages similar studies on teachers' beliefs. Additionally, Jalilzahed and Yeganehpour's findings demonstrate that, particularly during the COVID-19 period, teachers preferred portfolios to make a general classroom evaluation. The majority of the participants pointed out that portfolios were much more effective in evaluating writing skills than other skills performed in the EFL classroom.

More studies on teachers' beliefs towards portfolio assessment were done by Asamoah (2019) and Martinez (2020), that share the same opinion related to portfolio assessment in the EFL classroom. Martinez indicates that while using portfolio assessment in the ESL classroom or any other type of classroom, the teacher motivates students' integration in their learning process, which assists them in becoming more responsible for their learning. Asamoah also shares the overview that portfolio assessments empower teachers to concentrate on critical thinking skills. The reason is that portfolio assessment practice provides an accurate picture of what the student can do and helps to transform knowledge into practice. Moreover, several portfolio assessment activities are conducted throughout the instruction to assist students in improving their learning and thus, help teachers develop techniques and strategies for their educational improvement. Conclusively, portfolio assessment procedures simply answer the question, "How well can students use, practice, and apply their acquired knowledge?"

It is discussed by Borg (2003) that teachers' perceptions can influence their teaching practices. This argument was very close to the study findings conducted by Virgin and Bharati

(2020), which discovered that teachers positively perceived portfolio assessment while practicing it in their classroom. In addition, they believed that portfolio assessment provides several benefits for both students and teachers. Nevertheless, the findings also found some misconceptions between teachers' positive perceptions and classroom practice. The misunderstandings occurred because the teachers missed numerous essential elements while implementing portfolio assessments. Consequently, the study suggests that before implementing portfolio assessment, teachers need portfolio training or workshops to help them gain proper knowledge about this topic.

In previous years, much research has been conducted to investigate the importance of formative assessment in EFL learning. As a result, portfolio assessment has been found to be crucial in improving learners' language proficiency, their attitudes toward learning a foreign language, and their teachers' beliefs towards portfolio assessment. However, in Armenia, a limited number of studies examined the attitudes toward portfolio assessment and teachers' beliefs towards it. Considering the studies mentioned above and having assisting viewpoints from the literature, the research seeks to find answers to the following questions:

1. *What opinions do EFL learners have about the influence of portfolio assessment on their learning and overall learning experience?*
2. *What is the influence of portfolio assessment on the teachers' beliefs and assessment practices in the classroom?*

Chapter Three: Methodology

This study aimed to understand the impact of portfolio assessment on students' attitudes and learning experiences and the teacher's pedagogical practice in the Armenian EFL context by conducting action research in a local English language center. Therefore, this section describes the research process: it presents an overview of the setting, participants, data collection instruments, implemented procedures, and data collection analysis. Table 3.1 presents the methodology summary.

The research questions addressed in the current study were the following:

1. What opinions and attitudes do EFL learners have about the influence of portfolio assessment on their learning and overall learning experience?

2. What is the influence of portfolio assessment on the teachers' beliefs and assessment practices in the classroom?

To answer the research questions, qualitative and quantitative methods were implemented. The qualitative method in research is usually used to achieve an in-depth understanding of a particular topic, institution, or phenomenon. The qualitative approach used in this research was based on the above-reviewed literature and aimed at gathering facts that would assist students' EFL learning and their attitude towards the learning experience.

Table 3.1

Methodology Summary

Research Questions	Instruments	Sampling
1. What opinions and attitudes do EFL learners have about the influence of portfolio assessment on their learning and overall learning experience?	Student Surveys Students work in portfolios Pre- and Post-Interviews with the Teacher Researcher Observations	Purposive Sampling
2. What is the influence of portfolio assessment on the teachers' beliefs and assessment practices in the classroom?	Researcher Observations Pre- and Post-Interviews with the teacher	Purposive Sampling

3.2 Setting and Participants

This action research was conducted in a local English language center in Armenia, Yerevan, that provides English language lessons to Armenian students of different ages. This language center was selected because the teachers did not implement portfolio assessment in the classroom, and the students did not have similar experiences before. So, it was intended to investigate the influence of portfolio assessment on the current EFL setting. The language center was established about eight years ago. The language center also organizes international exams and Olympiads in Yerevan. The lessons are provided for preschoolers, schoolers, and adults in

groups and individually. Several groups of students learn English there. The groups include 5-15 students each. New students take a placement test to be placed in a particular group.

The target group of the investigation was a group of 12 continuing English language learners (10 girls, two boys) whose age is from 13 to 15 and one EFL teacher. The participants' first language was Armenian, and English was considered a foreign language for them. The students' English proficiency level was low-intermediate according to the current program of the language center. For the portfolio practice period, the students participated in two English language lessons per week that lasted one hour each.

The participant teacher was the owner of the language center wdelihere the research was conducted. She was 40 years old. She was a professional and had more than ten years of teaching experience. Her English proficiency level was advanced. She also provided Spanish language classes and organized an international English language Olympiad and certified English test exams in Armenia.

3.3 Materials

The teacher used the textbook "Destination B1" by Mann and Taylore-Knowles (2012) during the course. "Destination" is a modern series book of three levels focusing on grammar. It also includes different topics for vocabulary practice. It is relevant for students at low - intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, or advanced levels. The Up-to-date syllabuses are based on the B1, B2, C1, and C2 levels of the Council of Europe Framework. Also, the books have proper exercises designed for relevant exams. These are grammar practice books for students who want to enrich their grammar and vocabulary practice also for those preparing for their exams. The book incorporates several activities for practicing collocations, verb phrases,

word formations, etc. In addition, the book provides opportunities for the teachers to create several writing and speaking activities according to particular units. The coursebook consists of 28 units. Within 12 weeks of the research, the units of teacher's choice were covered in the class. The textbook itself was used as a base that provided topic and grammar ideas for the teacher to incorporate numerous supplementary activities and tasks that would help the students to perform writing, vocabulary, and speaking practice for portfolio assessment. The teacher used additional audio and video materials to develop students' receptive skills. In order not to cause inconvenience for the teacher and students, the researcher and the teacher compromised that the course would be mainly conducted by the cooperative teacher's usual lesson plans. Nevertheless, the researcher suggested minor modifications and additional writing and speaking activities during portfolio practice.

3.4 Instrumentation

To provide trustworthiness through combining information from different sources in this research, methodological triangulation was used. Triangulation uses multiple methods or data sources in qualitative research to understand the phenomena better (Patton, 1999). To meet the research objectives, the implemented instrumentation and steps of the research were discussed with the research advisor.

The following instruments were used to collect the data:

- Pre- and post- semi-structured interviews with the cooperating teacher
- Student surveys
- Researcher observations
- Students' works in portfolios (Writing and vocabulary, speaking)

3.4.1 Pre- and post- interviews

In order to avoid the disadvantages of the closed questionnaire, semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted to find out the teacher's beliefs about portfolios as an assessment tool and her student's first attitude toward portfolios (See Appendix A). The first interview was conducted at the beginning of portfolio practice, and the second one after finishing the practice. The interviews included open-ended questions. Open-ended questions can also stand on their own as the main questions in a survey on a topic, whereas closed-ended questions may not gather the whole needed information. In contrast to closed-ended questions, open-ended questions can support participants to share specific details about their experiences that the researcher did not predict, eventually providing information about the topic (Allen 2017). By requesting accurate feedback and emphasizing the diversity of responses, open-ended answers supplement quantitative results and help to tell a more delicate story with the gathered data.

The interview data were analyzed with thematic analysis using coding. This is a widespread method in qualitative research that allows organizing information to provide proper and purposeful conclusions from the collected data (Suter 2012). According to Saldana (2015), the open-ended questions are first investigated to re-examine the raw responses and begin the process of initial data coding by combining deductive codes extracted from the research questions and inductive codes aroused from the data. The preliminary codes are combined into categories during the coding process and form new codes. Through the coding process, data patterns make shapes and form the story data outline that enriches the results. Coding was used to collect the most common answers related to the topic.

3.4.2 Surveys

The surveys aimed to determine the students' attitudes and opinions towards portfolio assessment and learning. Students were given two surveys with open-ended and close-ended questions: first in the middle of the practice and the other after completing the portfolio practice (See Appendix B). The first survey integrated 11 open-ended questions to collect qualitative data. The reason for including the open-ended questions was to make the items understandable for the students. The second and final survey involved ten multiple-choice questions followed by four open-ended ones. The survey items were provided both in English and Armenian. Before answering the survey questions, the students were asked to feel free and be honest while giving the answers. To avoid misunderstanding issues related to answering the survey questions, the teacher and the researcher were present and provided assistance. Each student provided all the answers written and completed on the papers. The results of the surveys were analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively. The results were presented narratively and with the help of tables.

3.4.3 Observations

The purpose of observations in the current study was to understand the influence of portfolios on the students' attitudes towards English language learning experiences and the influence of portfolio practice on the teacher's beliefs and assessment practices in the particular classroom. Observations helped the researcher to gain conscientious insights about the research questions and portfolio practice in the particular classroom. Being an EFL teacher, the researcher

observed the participants during various classroom activities in their natural setting and carefully investigated their classroom practices from the teacher's perspective. The researcher took notes of all the steps and procedures done by the teacher and students during the lesson. The mentioned observations helped the researcher ensure the data gathered from semi-structured interviews.

3.4.4 Students' works in portfolios

Students' portfolios were also used to gather information for qualitative data. Students kept two types of portfolios during each cycle of current action research. The first portfolio included writing tasks such as descriptive essays, personal essays, compare and contrast essays, argumentative essays, emails, and topic-related vocabulary items for each lesson. Speaking portfolio involved several speaking tasks such as role-plays, dialogues, expressing opinions on different topics, debates, etc. The works integrated into portfolios served as an additional data collection method for the teacher and researcher to follow the progress of students' learning; to monitor whether they had new achievements in writing and, vocabulary, speaking.

3.5 Procedures

3.6 The Practice

The participants were informed about the procedures, goals, and the aim of the study from the beginning. Because this study was action research, purposive sampling was chosen to select the study participants. In terms of ethical consideration, the names and faces of participants were hidden, and anonymity was kept. Additionally, the researcher obtained the IRB certificate before the data collection to assure that appropriate steps were taken to protect the

rights and welfare of humans participating in the research. The oral consent was received from participants before participation and data collection.

The portfolio practice and research lasted for ten weeks. It started on January 8th and ended on March 30th. As action research, it was conducted in two cycles, and two types of portfolios were kept during the current study. This practice involved portfolios that received ongoing feedback and evaluation. No tests or grades were provided at the end of the practice. The first cycle included a working portfolio practice involving students' different writing pieces, such as several essays, emails, independent writings, summaries, and written records of their new-learned vocabulary words according to the book materials and topics. Almost every lesson the teacher allocated at least 15minutes for writing and vocabulary tasks. Vocabulary tasks sometimes were also assigned as homework. The errors were corrected in class: they were written on the board and were discussed in detail. From the beginning, the participants were introduced to the concept of portfolios and were shown examples of portfolio folders. Hard copies of the written materials were put into a folder per student during the practice. The cooperating teacher suggested keeping the folders on the center's shelf to assist students, so they did not carry them every time they came to the lesson. However, the students were free to take their work home to revise, organize and follow their papers whenever they wanted.

The second type of portfolio included speaking practice records kept as audio recording folders on their mobile devices. The procedure of this portfolio was thoroughly introduced by the cooperating teacher and the researcher to the students. The teacher suggested keeping track of the recordings by writing the date of each recording. The teacher chose the speaking topics and activities. During the speaking portfolio practice, students could perform several speaking tasks, such as dialogs, arguments, role-plays, debates, expressing an opinion, discussion, etc. After the

teacher explained some tasks, the students turned on their recorders and recorded themselves while performing individual or in pair activities. Additional speaking tasks for the portfolio were assigned as homework. The students shared the recording on group chat, so the teacher had opportunity to monitor and check, and peers had the opportunity and follow. They kept the recordings until the end of the portfolio practice and were able to compare, notice errors, and think of corrections. The advantage of this type of portfolio was the fact that the recordings were always at hand for the students to listen to and monitor their practice.

Feedback is the critical element of every formative assessment, and portfolio assessment is not an exception. Feedback allows students to follow and correct their errors and encourages educators to get a proper insight into students' achievements and provide more effective lessons. Hence, all the types of activities during portfolio assessment practice were followed by different types of formative feedback: feedback from the teacher, self-assessment peer, or assessment, the errors were discussed thoroughly and corrected with the students.

Chapter Four: Results

This chapter presents the qualitative and quantitative data collection results. First, it reveals the students' attitudes toward portfolio assessment and its influence on their overall learning experiences; second, the chapter demonstrates the influence of portfolios on the teacher's beliefs and assessment practices in the EFL classroom. Also, some facilitated issues were noticed during portfolio practice. Finally, it provides answers to the research questions raised in the study.

4.1 Research Question 1: What opinions and attitudes do EFL learners have about the influence of portfolio assessment on their learning and overall learning experience?

4.1.2 Students' opinions

One of the primary purposes of this study was to determine the impact of portfolio assessment on students' opinions during EFL learning. For this purpose, two surveys were conducted with the students: one included only open-ended questions, and the other included both open-ended and close-ended questions. Also, the data was gathered with the help of the teacher's notes extracted from the interview and the researcher's observations. Based on the first and second survey results (See Appendix B and C) and the researcher's observations, it became apparent that most students accepted keeping portfolios with excitement and enthusiasm as it was a **new** and **exciting** practice for them.

From the first survey, which involved open-ended questions, it became apparent that they enjoyed preparing for portfolio practice. It challenged them to gain more knowledge, **enlarge their vocabulary**, **"…understand the level of their writing,"** and make it easier to find ways

to improve it. From the teacher's final interview, it became clear that students performed noticeable achievements during the first cycle of portfolio assessment, predominantly during vocabulary practice which they **enjoyed** the most. This practice served as a vocabulary revision tool and a way of developing their writing tasks. Moreover, they thought it was a good way to develop their English skills by learning how to write new different types of essays. Once again, the exception was boys who did not consider this practice a motivation for learning and improvement.

On the qualitative data gathered from the surveys, most students did not consider this practice a waste of time, complicated or time-consuming, except the boys, who were not so motivated to keep a portfolio. According to the two boys' complaints noticed by the researcher and the teacher, it was evident that they reflected on this practice **"as additional homework'**. Although some of the students indicated that this practice was a little complicated and required serious effort as they had to write more essays and perform several other writing and speaking activities, they still admitted that this practice helped them document and monitor their progress. Following the cooperative teacher's notes, some students also indicated that they shared performing portfolio practice in their EFL classroom with their parents. Although there is no data collected from the parents, the students' survey answers and the teacher's notes reveal that parents expressed excitement and were happy that their children performed new and interesting practices while learning English.

4.1.3 Students' attitude toward their learning experience

Leaning on the data collection methods results, the majority of students definitely **enjoyed** portfolio practice; it helped them evaluate their progress and **identify strengths and**

weaknesses (See Table 4.1.4). Table 4.1.4 demonstrates the quantitative analysis of the second

survey with frequent answers and percentages (%). The following variables are presented in the

table: *(Agree+Strongly Agree=A+SA, Disagree+Strongly Disagree=D+SD)*

Table 4.1.4

Frequency of students' answers to the second survey with percentage (%)

Source/Question	Neutral		A+SA		D+SD	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Portfolio practice helped me evaluate my learning process, strengths, and weaknesses during the course	-	-	9	75	3	25
2. I enjoyed portfolio assessment in my EFL classroom.	2	16.6	8	66.6	2	16.6
3. I would prefer the usual grades or tests instead of a portfolio assessment.	10	83.3	2	16.6	-	-
4. I felt pressure and/or inconvenience during writing portfolio practice?	-	-	-	-	12	100
5. I felt pressure and/or inconvenience during speaking portfolio practice?	3	25	6	50	3	25
6. I noticed development in my English during and after the portfolio assessment.	2	16.6	10	83.3	-	-
8. My teacher's feedback helped me improve my writing English skills during portfolio practice?	2	16.6	10	83.3	-	-
9. I think portfolio assessment should be applied in English classes in different schools.	2	16.6	10	83.3	-	-
10. Does the portfolio assessment reflect whatever you have learned during the course?	6	50	6	50	-	-

-

Note. The remained question results are presented in figures and narratively

As the table shows, the students' answers to the first question demonstrate that most of them (75%) think that portfolios helped them evaluate their learning process, strengths, and weaknesses during the course. It means they could follow their work and understand what they need to improve and where they need improvement. From the second question data, only two participants (16.6%) did not enjoy keeping portfolios, two people (16.6%) expressed a neutral attitude, and eight people (66.6%) enjoyed keeping portfolios. This supports the results of the first survey, observations, and teacher's interview that revealed two boy participants' reluctant attitude towards portfolio. The boys mentioned that this was **"not an easy task to complete"** The third question shows that most students (83.3%) had neutral opinions about being graded with the help of portfolios instead of usual grades and tests. This makes the researcher believe that they did not typically concentrate on portfolios as an assessment tool, making it easier for them to keep and follow without thinking of being graded. For the fourth question, all students (100%, even boys) disagreed about experiencing any pressure or inconvenience during "writing" portfolios which means it was easy for them to practice. From the fifth question, it can be seen that the "speaking" portfolio was not accepted with a similar excitement as 50% of participants agreed that they felt some pressure and inconvenience during the practice**.** The researcher's observations and the teacher's notes also proved that they experienced **discomfort and anxiety** while recording their oral tasks, even for homework. They explained to the researcher that they **"did not like their voice after recording."** Again, the main issue occurred with the boys, who were not excited about this practice. Only *one student* mentioned that she preferred the speaking portfolio to the writing and vocabulary, as it was more beneficial for her and helped enhance her speaking skills.

Nevertheless, survey results and teacher interview data demonstrate that most students found portfolios helpful for their improving their speaking (See Appendix C, Figure 2). They shared their recordings with the teacher, and she noticed improvements in the fluency of their speeches, especially when they recorded speaking tasks as homework. She supposed that students felt more confident when they were recording their speech alone rather than in class in front of the teacher.

The sixth question revealed that 83.3% of participants noticed an improvement in their English with the help of portfolios. These opinions can be supported by the answers to question eight, which shows that for 83.3% of students, the teacher's feedback was helpful in improving their English during portfolio practice. The results of the ninth question show that 80% of participants would like to see portfolio practice in different public schools as well. In addition, according to the answers to the seventh question, portfolios helped most of them improve their writing and speaking skills and supplemented their vocabulary bank with a large number of new words and expressions (See Appendix C, Figure 2). According to the teacher's consideration, checking their portfolio works and the students' survey data it was revealed that it was helpful for 50% of students in improving grammar. For 33%, it was very helpful, and for 17%, it was not helpful at all. In relation to vocabulary, 75% of students found portfolios very helpful and 25% helpful. Regarding speaking improvements, it can be seen that although some students experienced inconvenience, 58% found "speaking" portfolios very helpful in improving their speaking skills, 25% found it helpful, and only 17% found it not helpful at all (See Appendix C, Figure 1).

For the question asking the students' opinion on the purpose of portfolio practice, some of them mentioned quite reasonable answers. Participant N1 wrote, **"portfolios are a way of**

combining our classroom tasks and seeing the completed results"; also, participant N2 mentioned, **"it is a good idea, especially for teenagers, to motivate us to do classwork and homework properly."** The students learned how to **"keep their work tidy"** during the portfolio practice and do it fast. However, only some students didn't notice significant improvements in their grammar.

Furthermore, according to the results of qualitative and quantitative data (interview and survey), the students experienced a little bit of **pressure** in the middle of portfolio practice. The interview data revealed that sometimes students were tired during the lesson; the teacher noticed that constant writing tasks were new to them, and they didn't get used to it before portfolio assessment. The number of their writings increased so that they could have written materials for portfolio practice. Usually, they used to write only two or three essays in a month, but with portfolio practice, that number changed to at least one essay per lesson. Although the teacher didn't think that portfolios were the main reason for students being tired, she related that fact to the overall workload of studies. She mentioned that every new piece of writing was beneficial for them in terms of improving the structures of their essays.

Based on the teacher's and the researcher's observations, the students changed their "**attitudes**" for the better in general toward learning English. More particularly, when they had portfolio-related tasks, they came to the lesson with very well-prepared homework, challenged each other by asking about the number of words included in their vocabulary, and were eager to perform another new writing or speaking task. Overall, it was evident from the teacher's interview and the researcher's observations that they enjoyed learning English with the help of portfolio practice as it was something new for them.

In general, to reveal the data merging into the category of students' "**attitudes**," most of the students mentioned that they **liked learning English before and enjoyed it even more** with the help of portfolios. The portfolios were **quite time-consuming** but, at the same time, **easy to keep and follow** (See Appendix 6, Figure 3). Overall, the majority of participants, except two boys, did not notice anything negative about keeping portfolios. In addition, the qualitative data revealed that at the beginning of portfolio practice, the students were a little bit afraid as they did not imagine the teacher's demands and it was something new for them, but during the portfolio practice, the students realized that this is **"not something to struggle with,"** and they enjoyed the practice. It could be inferred that the boys' negative attitudes could also change during a longer period of portfolio practice, especially if the teacher suggested some specific writing topics of interest to the boys. Table 4.1.5 presents the students' positive and negative attitudes towards portfolio assessment.

Table 4.1.5

Students' positive and negative attitudes towards portfolio assessment

Positive attitudes expressed by 75% of participants **(Gender-female)**	Negative attitudes expressed by 25% of participants (**Gender -two males, one female**)
Portfolios help to monitor writing	Portfolios were additional work
Portfolios helped in combining tasks and seeing results	Portfolios were quite time-consuming
The portfolio assessment helped to keep work tidy	Portfolios were challenging
Portfolios helped to improve writing	Speaking portfolios caused inconvenience
Portfolios helped to develop new vocabulary bank	

Note. Negative attitudes as data were generated from the three participants' survey answers: two boys and one girl

4.2 Research Question 2: Influence of Portfolio Assessment on Teacher's Beliefs and Practices

4.2.1 The Teacher's Beliefs

The quantitative data included pre- and post-face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the cooperating teacher. Interviews also involved spontaneous follow-up questions to validate the teachers' answers. Pre-interview with the teacher was conducted to collect data related to her beliefs, expectations, and challenges perceptions towards portfolios as an assessment tool, also the students' first attitudes towards portfolios. Post-interview with the teacher was conducted to

determine any changes in her perceptions and beliefs regarding portfolio assessment, its challenges, advantages/disadvantages, and its influence on her pedagogical practice.

For the questions identifying the teacher's "**Beliefs**" during the *pre-interview*, it was obvious that the teacher was definitely for implementing portfolio assessment. She had a positive attitude towards it, although she also had some doubts about portfolio practice; she presumed that this practice might be hard, sometimes tiring, confusing, and time-consuming for her and the students. Nevertheless, she believed it might be influential for her EFL classroom to perform such practice as each new classroom practice carries some benefits. Further interview questions revealed that she believed this practice would either make the students and her more patient or cause some disappointment among some students because of being complicated and new for them. From the question asking what expectations she had from the students during the upcoming portfolio assessment, she mentioned that she expects them to increase their confidence and responsibility towards learning. In addition, to answer the following question on the possible benefits of portfolio assessment for her pedagogical "**practices**," the teacher noted that portfolios might help her become more patient as a teacher and reduce the burnout effect. Moreover, to answer the question concerning the "**benefits**" of portfolio assessment on her students, she assumed that it might help the students boost their vocabulary faster, improve writing and speaking skills, and encourage them to study harder. She also believed that portfolio assessment would help build new and stronger relationships between the teacher and students.

4.2.2 Changes in the teacher's beliefs

"....even failure is an advantage."

The final interview data combined into the category of "**beliefs**" exposed that she changed her doubting attitude towards portfolio assessment that she had at the beginning of this

practice. She also revealed that this practice was not difficult at all and wasn't as time-consuming as she supposed before. To answer the question asking about the advantages/disadvantages of portfolio assessment, she mentioned that "every new practice in teaching is definitely an advantage." The teacher mentioned that failures make the students grow and correct themselves after all. Even if there were some failures (the boys' reluctant attitude toward learning and portfolio practice), they could also be considered an advantage in this case. However, she did not notice any disadvantages.

4.2.3 The teacher's classroom practices

In order to ensure the triangulation method in qualitative research, the observations by the researcher were done during the implementation of the portfolio assessment to find out the influence of portfolio assessment on her classroom practices. In addition, a post-interview was conducted to find out possible changes in her pedagogical approach. Following each interview, data were analyzed for frequent themes based on first sight categories and emerging categories to demonstrate the teacher's "**beliefs**" towards portfolio assessment and its "influence" on her teaching "**practice**." While examining the category of the teacher's classroom "**practices**," pre-observations and pre-interview data revealed that the teacher commonly followed the book material without including continuous formative assessment tasks in the classroom routine. Although she was familiar with this type of formative assessment from her colleagues during her teaching practice in Moscow, she did not have a chance to implement it in her Armenian EFL classroom because of the usual classroom workload and limited time. According to the teacher's consideration, she also used to assign short writing tasks to the students, as she mentioned "were afraid of long writing tasks." Nonetheless, she constantly created tasks based on debates and role-plays.

4.2.4 Changes in classroom practices

From the results of observations during the portfolio assessment and the *post-interview*, it was noticed that the teacher started to include more purposeful and various activities in the classroom routine, thus adding new experiences to her teaching "**practice**." For example, she began to use more visual and audio materials before assigning writing and speaking tasks and peer assessment. She also started to prepare the portfolio activities before the lesson, which she didn't usually do before. So, it can be inferred that she performed more responsibility and effectiveness for classroom management and lesson planning.

Moreover, the final interview data unifying the category of classroom "**practices**" demonstrated that the teacher benefited from the portfolio assessment. The teacher made noticeable changes in her teaching style and became more patient with formative assessment tasks. In addition, the teacher was ready to implement portfolio assessment in her other EFL classrooms, such as with younger learners. She supported the idea that it is not possible to evaluate the students' learning only using a summative assessment that includes traditional tests and grades. She pointed out the necessity of formative assessments such as portfolios in the EFL classroom, as they worked very well in her classroom and helped to disclose the students' creativity. According to the observations and interview data, the only disappointment was the case of boys who were not enthusiastic about portfolio assessment. Finally, the interview data acknowledged that even with a regular classroom workload and limited class time, it was possible to implement portfolio assessment bringing new beneficial **practices** to her EFL classroom.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

The current research was conducted to determine the influence of portfolio assessment on students' opinions, attitudes and overall learning process and to find out the teacher's beliefs and attitudes towards it. For this study, qualitative and quantitative data were collected through pre and post interviews with the cooperative teacher, observations by the researcher, also two surveys with students, the first of which was provided during the portfolio practice and the second one after finishing the portfolio practice. Students' works included in portfolios were also used as a source of data. The present chapter exhibits the discussion and conclusion of data analyzed qualitatively and quantitatively, also summarizes the findings, answers the research questions, and presents the limitations and delimitations encountered while conducting the current mixed-method research. It also provides suggestions for further research.

5.1 Summary of research findings

The research findings are summarized according to the research questions.

1. What opinions and attitudes do EFL learners have about the influence of portfolio assessment on their learning and overall learning experience?

The evidence developed from data collection methods contributed to the data that helped answer the research questions. For the answer to the first research question, it became apparent the majority of students demonstrated positive attitudes toward portfolio practice and the learning process (Tyas, 2020; Khonbi and Sadeghi, 2012; Romova and Andrew, 2011). Nevertheless, the findings present some drawbacks of portfolio assessment related to students' attitudes. The researcher noticed some issues related to students' anxiety and disappointment while performing speaking tasks for speaking portfolios. The students shared that they liked speaking tasks but did

not always enjoy recording themselves. Also, most students considered this practice easy and, at the same time, time-consuming; the boys thought it was not exciting at all. They also thought it was additional work and homework for them. This statement parallels the results of Balasanyan's (2011) study, which found boys' negative attitudes toward portfolio assessment. The data collection also revealed that the students mostly benefited from portfolio assessment as it helped them monitor their writing and speaking skills and revise and develop their vocabulary. The current findings correlate to the number of studies in the literature (Yazici, 2021; Goctu, 2016; Torosyan, 2011.)

   2. What is the influence of portfolio assessment on the teachers' beliefs and assessment practices in the classroom?

   To answer the second research question, qualitative data collection revealed that the cooperating teacher had positive beliefs about implementing portfolio assessment in her EFL classroom. Virgin and Bharati (2020) also support this idea. Though she also expressed some doubts and fears about it at the beginning, she pointed out some students' complaints regarding this practice as additional work. As Borg (2003) states, the teachers' perceptions can influence their teaching practices. This argument was very close to the findings of the current study that demonstrate the teacher's positive beliefs towards portfolio assessment at the beginning of the practice helped develop her teaching practices over time. The findings of the study conducted by Virgin and Bharati (2020) also support the present research findings related to the fact that the teacher demonstrated observable changes in her teaching style, classroom assessment practices, and pedagogical patience. She realized that it is necessary to allocate time and effort for formative assessments in the EFL classroom as significant benefits follow it both for the students

and the teachers. The portfolios helped the teacher evaluate and monitor the students' learning

process, making them more responsible for their learning (Asamoah, 2010; Martinez, 2020).

5.2 Conclusion

Overall, the teacher and the students mainly benefited from the portfolio assessment. It

influenced the students' attitudes towards the learning process positively. It helped the teacher to

reconsider her beliefs about portfolios as an assessment tool and elevate her pedagogical

practices by adding new additional teaching methods. Furthermore, the influence of portfolio

assessment was apparent in changing the students' attitude towards the standard assessment

methods. The students and the teacher believed that traditional grades and tests only could not

demonstrate students' achievements in EFL learning.

In general all students stated that portfolio assessment should also be used in public

schools. Portfolios give a clear picture of students' learning processes and accomplishments,

revealing purposeful information for the teacher to identify different students' individual learning

strategies and styles (Manukyan, 2010). In the current case, portfolio assessment also helped the

teacher to have a clearer picture of boy students learning issues and reluctant attitudes towards

new learning methods. In addition, Hashemian and Fadaei (2013) state that portfolios can

noticeably improve the learners' autonomy and motivate them to become actively engaged in the

language learning process. This idea contradicts the current research findings related to the

participant boys, who did not perform interest in during the practice; portfolios did not serve as a

motivation for learning.

Nevertheless, suppose the time allocated for the portfolio assessment was more. In that

case, it might be possible to integrate the boys into the practice more effectively, and their

learning would similarly benefit from this practice. To sum up, the major findings of current

research can be considered the following: the participant students became more responsible for their learning, performed better in essay writing, and developed their vocabulary. Also, it was inferred that students recorded their speaking tasks easily when they did it as homework. The next significant finding is the change in the teacher's beliefs and doubting attitudes towards formative assessment in the classroom and adding new pedagogical practices to the usual classroom routine and assessment methods.

5.3 Pedagogical Implications

Mixed-method data collection for current action research opened space for implications regarding classroom practices during portfolio assessment and any other types of formative assessment. First of all, it is worth mentioning some practical recommendations for the teachers from other educational institutions.

First, the teachers should be more open to new formative assessment methods, ready to cooperate with researchers, and not be afraid of new, seemingly complicated tasks that might be beneficial for classroom assessment and pedagogical practices. For this purpose, it would be important to follow the steps suggested by Delett et al. (2001) that would guide them to implement portfolios easily. Also, for teachers who implement portfolios for the first time, it is recommended to start with less complicated portfolios such as writing portfolios.

Next, the current research findings seem to demonstrate the importance of formative assessment methods in learners' performances and their positive attitude towards such methods. According to Salim Al-Naibi et al. (2019), it is essential to revise the objectives and purpose of portfolio assessment in the classroom. The mentioned will eventually bring a better attitude toward portfolios from teachers and students as they provide a useful signal for improvements in

the practice of portfolio assessment implemented in the EFL context. As a recommendation, the teachers can prepare their students for portfolios by showing them portfolio folder examples, explaining the purpose of portfolios, the gathering process thoroughly, helping to identify goals, and providing them assistance during the practice.

Accordingly, portfolios can be integrated into every classroom as an essential tool for learning and assessment. They give the students to identify and overcome their strengths and weaknesses in EFL learning. Cheng (1997) has discussed a portfolio as a helpful tool for teaching English as a foreign language. The author states that portfolios can be considered tools necessary for learning improvement to benefit teachers' classroom practices and pedagogical goals. As an integral part of the portfolio assessment process, the teachers can plan their classroom tasks in advance, and make notes to record any issues, drawbacks, students' strengths, weaknesses, learning needs, and goals. This can help the teachers evaluate and plan relevant pedagogical practices during the ongoing students' assessment.

Moreover, portfolios can also support parent-teacher-student relationships as it is necessary for the teacher to communicate with parents and demonstrate additional evidence of their learning. As Mokhataria (2015) states, the parents' or community's potential disapproval may be a downside of using a portfolio assessment if this method is an unfamiliar system. Consequently, the teacher needs to have a good explanation and understanding of how portfolios may be beneficial for the EFL classroom. It would help explain the purpose of portfolios to the parents and students to avoid unawareness.

Lastly, to bring interest to speaking portfolios that the students do not usually welcome with great pleasure, it would be beneficial for the teacher to explain the purpose of speaking tasks and the necessity of recordings to improve their speech. It would be more practical for the

speaking portfolios to assign speaking tasks at home so that students can feel more comfortable recording themselves without other people's presence. For the issue related to portfolios being time-consuming, it would be useful to dedicate some time from each lesson to portfolio tasks to avoid overloading the whole lesson with one practice only. Finally, to create interest among reluctant students related portfolios, it is advised to choose and discuss more relevant topics for the students, especially boys in class.

5.4 Limitations and Delimitations

No study can be considered perfect. So, the limitations of the current study need to be presented. Some researchers may consider the number of participants (12 students, one teacher) as a limitation. Still, since this was action research and there was no intention to create statistical generalizations beyond this class, the sample size did not present methodological limitations. However, the time allocated for the research was limited (10 weeks), which didn't give the researcher enough opportunities to explore the data more thoroughly. Delimitations may be considered the followings: the age of the participants age tat varied from 13-15 and the setting of this practice.

5.5 Suggestions for Further Research

Considering the limitations of this study, it would be beneficial to conduct similar research in the Armenian EFL context with more participants. Moreover, it would be interesting to carry out this type of research for more advanced, specifically academic level EFL learners, to understand the possible influences of portfolio assessment on their attitude towards learning. Lastly, for further investigation, it is recommended to conduct similar studies for more extended

periods to clearly understand the influence of portfolio assessment on students' learning practices. Also, in the researcher's considerations, it would be beneficial for the local context to conduct this kind of research, including a group of young learners that would keep portfolios of their classroom works such as arts, crafts, etc. This would be a motivation for the teacher to incorporate more arts and crafts activities with young learners for more effective language learning.

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Appendix A

Pre- and Post-Interview Questions for the Teacher
Pre-interview questions for the teacher

1. In general, what do you think of portfolio assessment?

2. How might it be applied in a specific classroom?

3. What are your beliefs towards portfolio assessment in general? (pros and cons)

4. What do you think about the benefits of portfolio assessment in your EFL classroom?
   (What might be some benefits of portfolio assessment for an Armenian EFL classroom)?

5. What do you think of portfolio assessment benefits for the EFL teacher's practice in the
   classroom?

6. How can portfolio assessment influence your teaching practice?

7. What expectations do you have from your class during upcoming portfolio practice?

8. What benefits can it add to your classroom assessment practice, if any?

9. How do you think students may react to the implementation of portfolio assessment in
   your classroom?

10. What challenges do you think may come up during portfolio practice? (Both for the
    teacher and students)

11. What activities do you think are suitable for portfolio assessment in your classroom?
    (Writing and speaking)

12. Would you consider adding new writing and speaking activities to your classroom during
    portfolio assessment?

Post-interview questions with the teacher

1. What did you feel (What were your impressions) at the beginning of portfolio practice and after finishing the practice?

2. What did your students feel about portfolio assessment at the beginning of the practice and after finishing the practice?

3. What were the advantages and disadvantages of portfolio assessment for you as a teacher?

4. Do you consider portfolio assessment time-consuming, or was it easy to implement?

5. What changes did you notice in your students' learning during portfolio assessment?

6. How did portfolio practice influence your students' attitudes towards learning?

7. What do you think your students liked the most about keeping portfolios?

8. How did portfolio assessment influence your teaching practice?

9. Would you consider implementing portfolios in your other EFL classes, and why?

10. Would you recommend your colleagues use portfolio assessment in their EFL classrooms?

11. What beliefs did you have about classroom assessment before implementing the portfolio? (Formative assessment vs. Summative; tests and grades)

12. How did your beliefs related to classroom assessment change after implementing portfolios?

Appendix B

Surveys for Students

The First Survey Questions

1. What do you think is the purpose of the portfolio?

2. How did you accept the fact that you are going to keep portfolios during your English classes?

3. Do you enjoy preparing the portfolio? Why yes or why not?

4. What do you like the most about keeping a portfolio?

5. What did you learn from the portfolio?

6. Is there anything negative about the portfolio?

7. Do you think portfolios are easy to keep and follow?

8. Do you think it is a waste of time? Why yes, why not?

9. Have you noticed if your teacher is checking your portfolio or giving you feedback on your portfolio?

10. Did you tell your parents that you are keeping a portfolio in your English class?

11. If yes, how did they react to that?

The Second Survey Questions

1. Portfolio practice helped me evaluate my learning process, strengths, and weaknesses during the course.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

2. I enjoyed portfolio assessment in my EFL classroom.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

3. I would prefer the usual grades or tests instead of a portfolio assessment.

Strongly agree   Agree   neutral   disagree   Strongly disagree

4. I felt pressure and/or inconvenience during writing portfolio practice?

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

5. I felt pressure and/or inconvenience during speaking portfolio practice?

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

6. I noticed development in my English during and after the portfolio assessment.

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

7. How helpful do you find portfolios in improving different areas of your English?

    Writing   Very helpful   Helpful   Not helpful at all

    Vocabulary   Very helpful   Helpful   Not helpful at all

    Grammar   Very helpful   Helpful   Not helpful at all

    Speaking   Very helpful   Helpful   Not helpful at all

8. My teacher's feedback helped me improve my writing English skills during portfolio practice?

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

9. I think portfolio assessment should be applied in English classes in different schools

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

    10. Does the portfolio assessment reflect whatever you have learned during the course?

Strongly agree   Agree   Neutral   Disagree   Strongly disagree

    11. Which type of portfolio did you enjoy the most (Writing and vocabulary or Speaking)

       and why?

    12. How did your attitude towards English learning change after the portfolio assessment?

    13. Overall, is there anything negative about portfolio assessment?
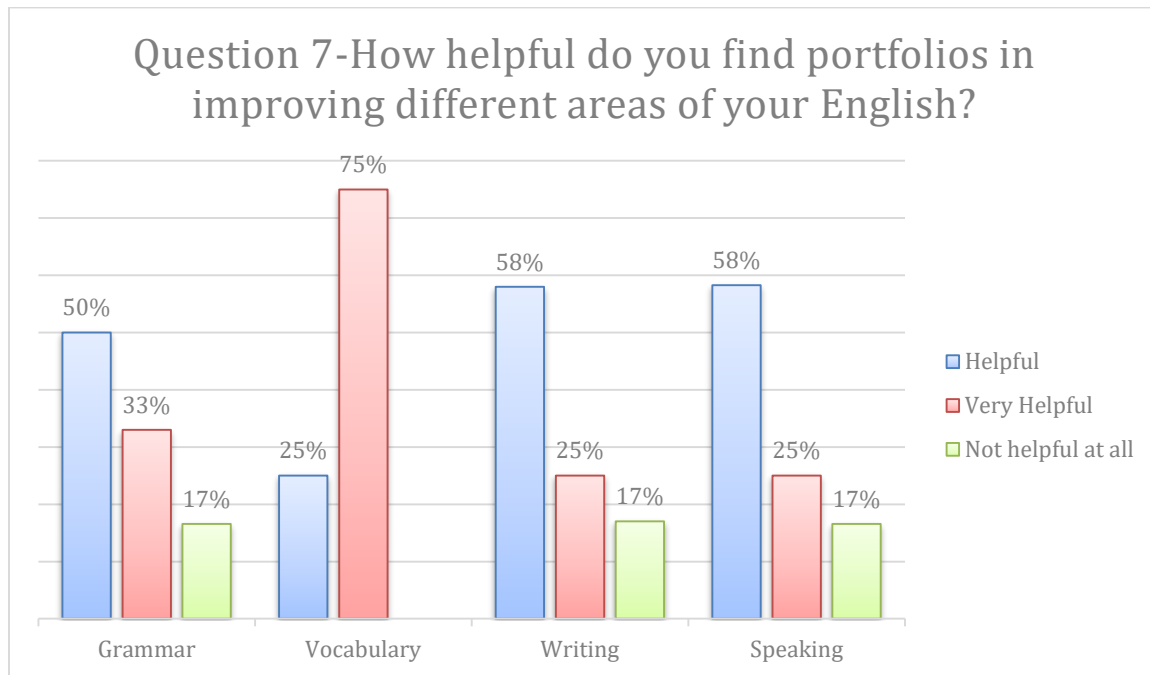
    14. Was it easy to keep portfolios, or was it time-consuming? (Write your answer)
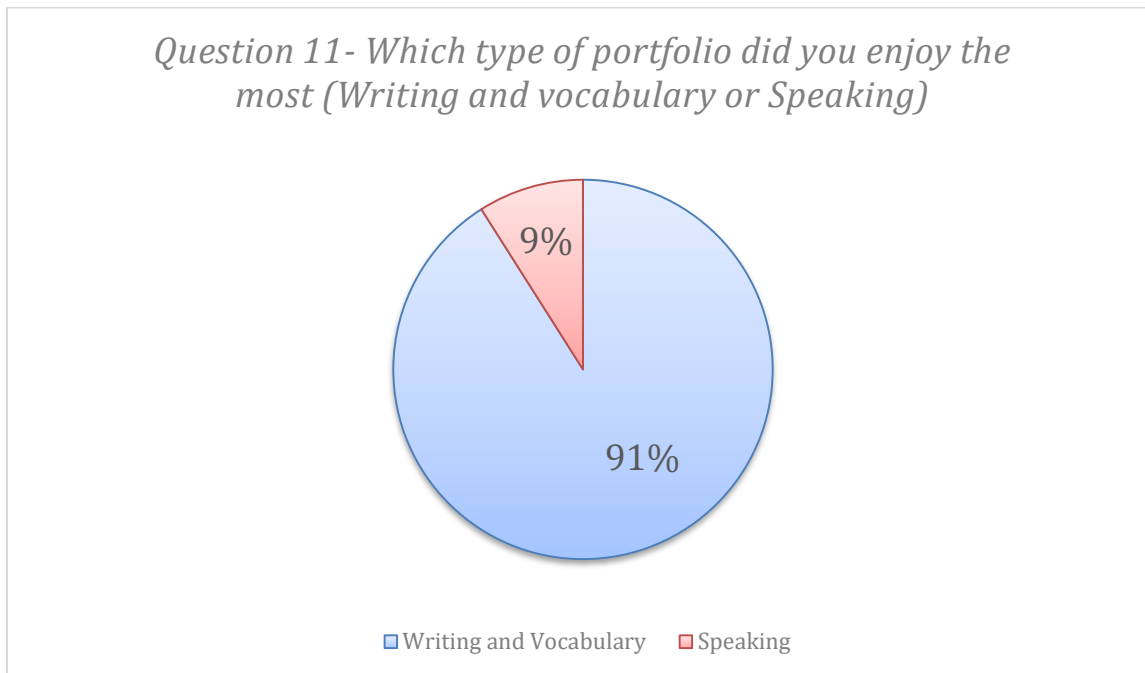
Appendix C

Figures

Figure 1

Participants' responses on how helpful portfolios were in improving their grammar, vocabulary,

writing, or speaking

Question 7-How helpful do you find portfolios in improving different areas of your English?

Figure 2

Participants' responses on the type of portfolio they enjoyed the most

Question 11- Which type of portfolio did you enjoy the most (Writing and vocabulary or Speaking)

Figure 3

Participants' responses on portfolios being easy or time-consuming

Question 14-Was it easy to keep portfolios or it was time consuming (Write your answer)?

- Easy — 45%
- Time-consuming — 25%
- Easy but time-consuming — 30%