

**T. C.**  
**ULUDAĞ ÜNİVERSİTESİ**  
**SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**  
**YABANCI DİLLER EĞİTİMİ ANABİLİM DALI**  
**İNGİLİZ DİLİ EĞİTİMİ BİLİM DALI**

**PERSPECTIVES OF YOUNG LEARNERS OF ENGLISH**  
**TOWARDS ASSESSMENT:**  
**FORMATIVE or SUMMATIVE?**

**(YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ)**

**İlyas Çağlar DOĞANDERE**

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SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ MÜDÜRLÜĞÜNE

Yabancı Diller Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Bilim Dalı'nda 20034514 numaralı İlyas Çağlar DOĞANDERE'nin hazırladığı "İngilizce öğrenen ilköğretim öğrencilerinin değerlendirme sürecine bakış açıları: süreç mi? sonuç mu?" konulu Yüksek Lisans Tezi ile ilgili tez savunma sınavı, 09/02/2007 tarihinde 13.00-14.00 saatleri arasında yapılmış, sorulan sorulara alınan cevaplar sonunda adayın tezi oybirliği (oybirliği/oyçokluğu) ile kabul edilmiştir.

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## ABSTRACT

The recent trends in English Language Teaching methodology have forced language teachers to look for alternative ways of assessment that would be compatible with the methods frequently used in the classroom. The objective of the present study is to investigate the perspectives of young learners of English towards assessment through formative or summative ways. Portfolio assessment and traditional paper-and-pencil exams were used throughout the term to help the participants differentiate between formative and summative assessment, which would form their opinions on the issue.

The present study was carried out with 150 primary school students from the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades in a public primary school in the province of Duzce. The data was obtained through a learner questionnaire composed of 21 items and a learner interview.

The analysis of the data elicited from the learner questionnaire and interviews with the participants demonstrated that young language learners have positive attitudes towards formative assessment. However, it was found that some of the participants from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade are against portfolio assessment due to the exam they will take at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Furthermore, peer-assessment as an alternative way of assessment that fosters ongoing record-keeping is criticized by learners as their peers' comments on their portfolios may be discouraging for them.

The findings from the study suggest that language teachers make use of alternative ways of assessment in addition to traditional assessment tools so that they can assess their learners on a continuous basis by taking into account the whole performance of their learners in the classroom. Besides, it is stated in the study that a central examination to select students for high schools may hamper English language teaching, for learners may feel that studying for the exam is much more important than learning English since it does not include questions in English.

**Key Words (English):** Formative assessment, Summative assessment, Portfolio assessment, Peer-Assessment, Self-assessment

İlyas Çağlar Doğandere, MA Thesis, 2006

## ÖZET

İngiliz dili eğitimi metodolojisindeki son eğilimler dil öğretmenlerini sınıfta sıklıkla kullandıkları yöntemlerle uyumlu alternatif değerlendirme yolları aramaya zorlamıştır. Bu çalışmanın hedefi İngilizce öğrenen çocukların süreç odaklı değerlendirme yolları ve sonuç odaklı değerlendirme yolları yoluyla değerlendirmeye olan bakış açılarını araştırmaktır. Dönem boyunca katılımcıların süreç ve sonuç odaklı değerlendirme arasındaki farkı ayırt etmelerine yardım etmek için portfolyo değerlendirmesi ve geleneksel kalem-ve-kâğıt sınavları kullanıldı ki bu onların konu üzerindeki fikirlerini şekillendirecekti.

Bu çalışma Düzce ilinde bir devlet okulundaki 4., 5., 6. ve 7. sınıflardan 150 öğrenci ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Veriler 21 maddeden oluşan bir öğrenci anketi ve bir öğrenci mülakatından elde edilmiştir.

Öğrenci anketi ve öğrenci mülakatından elde edilen verilerin analizi çocukların sürece dayanan değerlendirmeye olumlu tavırlarının olduğunu göstermiştir. Fakat 7. sınıf öğrencilerinin bazılarının portfolyo değerlendirmesine 8. sınıf sonunda girecekleri sınav sebebi ile karşı oldukları bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, süreç boyu kayıt tutmayı teşvik eden alternatif bir değerlendirme olan akran değerlendirmesi de bazı öğrencilerce arkadaşlarının kendileri hakkındaki yorumları cesaret kırıcı olabildiği için eleştirilmiştir.

Bu çalışmadan elde edilen bulgular, dil öğretmenlerinin geleneksel değerlendirme araçlarına ek olarak sınıfta öğrencilerinin bütün performansını dikkate alarak öğrencilerini süreç boyu değerlendirmeleri için alternatif değerlendirme yollarından da faydalanmalarını önermektedir. Ayrıca, çalışmada ortaöğretim okulları için öğrenci seçmek amacı ile yapılan merkezi sınavın İngiliz dili öğretimini güçleştireceği vurgulanmaktadır, çünkü sınav İngilizce sorulara yer vermediği için öğrenciler sınava çalışmanın İngilizce öğrenmekten daha önemli olduğunu hissedebilir.

**Key Words (Turkish):** Süreç bazlı değerlendirme, Sonuç bazlı değerlendirme, Portfolyo değerlendirmesi, Akran değerlendirmesi, Öz değerlendirme

İlyas Çağlar Doğandere, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, 2006

## **PREFACE**

The present study aimed to investigate young language learners' perspectives on assessment through formative and summative ways. It is suggested in the study that language teachers become aware of alternative ways of assessment and take advantage of them so that they can monitor their learners on a continuous basis.

I am very grateful to my supervisor Asst. Prof. Dr. Derya Döner Yılmaz for her academic support and encouragement in my present study.

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## **ABBREVIATIONS**

**CLT:** Communicative Language Teaching

**EFL:** English as a Foreign Language

**ELT:** English Language Teaching

**MNE:** Ministry of National Education

**OKS:** Student Selection Examination for High Schools

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This thesis reports on a study that investigates the perspectives of young learners of English towards assessment through formative or summative way.

This chapter first aims to present the rationale for the present study. Then, the purpose of the study is given with the research questions which leads the study. Finally, the organization of the study is presented in brief.

#### **1.1.Rationale for the Study**

Over the last decade, English Language Teaching (ELT) has witnessed a paradigmatic shift from a teacher-centered approach which concentrates on the teaching of grammar and vocabulary to a learner-centered approach. Teachers in favour of the Grammar-Translation Method would spend their time focusing on grammar and vocabulary of the target language. The performance of the learners would be assessed through traditional paper-and-pencil exams at the end of each unit. When Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) gained popularity among language teachers, the perspectives toward assessment started to change. Traditional assessment of language performance through summative tools was criticized due to the fact that they could not encompass the performance of language learners in the classroom. It was seen that there was a mismatch between the activities used in the classroom and the items in written exams. Furthermore, assessment would direct the curriculum instead of assisting it. Traditional assessment had limitations in assessing the language performed in the classroom by the learners, which would result in poor quality of assessment. Therefore, alternative ways of assessment were necessary to assess language learners' performance.

While international debate over assessment was going on, Turkey adopted a new legislation in 1997, making 8 year primary education compulsory for every child.

Meanwhile, Turkey applied for full membership to the European Union in the late 1990s, which increased the significance of foreign language learning at an early age. With the legislation adopted, English was, therefore, a compulsory course starting at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. However, assessment tools appropriate for adult language learners were considered inappropriate for young learners, which necessitated the use of alternative ways of assessment that would foster classroom instruction while providing ongoing feedback to both teachers and learners. Hence, a research on young language learners' attitudes towards assessment became inevitable.

## **1.2. Purpose of the Study**

Since teaching a foreign language to young learners is not the same as teaching it to adult learners, assessment of young language learners' performance needs to be considered thoroughly. As stated above, teachers in Turkey make use of modern methods while presenting the target language, yet they still make use of traditional paper-and-pencil exams to monitor the efficiency of their teaching and their learners' performance. The study would make suggestions to language teachers and curriculum designers in the Ministry of National Education (MNE). Language teachers aware of the mismatch between their modern language teaching methods and traditional assessment tools they prefer would be able to look for alternative assessment tools that would motivate their learners. Through the present study, language learners' perspectives on alternative ways of assessment would also help curriculum designers to develop new ways for selecting students to high schools without hampering the teaching of English as a foreign language.

The present study on young language learners' assessment is conducted in the guidance of the following research questions:

1. What are the perspectives of young language learners on assessment in terms of formative assessment?
2. What are the perspectives of young language learners on assessment in terms of summative assessment?

3. What are the perspectives of young language learners on test anxiety they experience due to written or oral exams?
4. What are the perspectives of young language learners on portfolio assessment which is used to assess their performance on language learning?
5. What are the perspectives of young language learners on self-assessment?
6. What are the perspectives of young language learners on peer-assessment?

Built on the research questions above, the present study is composed of six chapters. Following the introduction chapter, the next chapter presents a review of the literature on the characteristics of young language learners and alternative ways of assessing their language performance.

Chapter three is concerned with the methodology of the present study. In this chapter, the data collection procedures, participants, and data collection instruments are presented.

Chapter four is aimed to present the results obtained from the main data collection instrument, which is the learner questionnaire, in the form of graphs and tables.

Chapter five is devoted to the discussion of the results presented in the previous chapter. The data based on the learner questionnaire are supported by learner interview data when necessary.

Chapter six first provides the conclusion of the present study. Then, limitations of the study are given. Finally, after presenting the pedagogical implications of the study, the chapter ends with suggestions for further research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter concentrates on the theoretical and methodological approaches on assessment of young language learners who are learning a foreign language. First, it starts with a review of who young language learners are and how they learn a foreign language so that we can draw a frame for an answer to the question of how we can assess young learners' performance on the target language. Then, the question of why we assess language performance of young learners is presented. Having dealt with the characteristics of young language learners and the theories associated with assessment of language performance, the chapter presents the distinction between formative and summative ways of assessment by explaining pros and cons of applying them. Finally, the chapter presents alternative ways of assessing language performance of young learners on a continuous basis introducing portfolio assessment, self-assessment, and peer-assessment.

#### 2.1. Young Language Learners and Assessment

We as language teachers should be aware of the characteristics of young language learners, so that we can implement appropriate techniques to assess their performance in the target language. Techniques we apply to adults to assess their performance may be incompatible for young learners, which may result in negative attitudes towards learning a foreign language due to failure in tests.

The term 'a young learner' encompasses children from the first year of formal schooling (6 year-old learners) to the 7<sup>th</sup> year of schooling (12 year-old learners). Brewster *et.al.* (2002:27) distinguish young children from older learners as follows:

- 'Young children are different from older learners because children:
  - have a lot of physical energy and often need to be physically active



- are emotionally excitable
- are still developing literacy in their first language
- learn more slowly and forget things quickly
- get bored easily
- can concentrate for a surprisingly long time if they are interested
- can be easily distracted but also very enthusiastic...'

As stated above, young language learners have a lot of energy which needs to be taken into consideration while determining the tools for assessing their performance. However, they can get bored easily. Assessment applied in the foreign language classroom, therefore, needs to foster their energy, so that learning the target language will not be boring for them.

Furthermore, young learners have some advantages over adult learners. It has been widely observed that starting to learn a foreign language at an early age is very crucial for children. Based on the Critical Period Hypothesis, it is argued that there is a time in human development when the brain is predisposed for success in language learning (Lightbrown and Spada 2003). Young learners are observed to acquire a native-like accent in the target language if they start to learn a foreign language at an early age. Therefore, learners' motivation to learn a foreign language at an early age gains significance. However, there are some factors that are known to affect language learners' motivation in a negative way. For instance, when learners feel that they have no aptitude in learning a foreign language, they are discouraged from learning it. Assessment used in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, if not suitable for young learners, is bound to lower their motivation, which results in failure in making use of the period critical for language learning.

In order to establish a view on assessing young language learners in the target language, it is significant to have a background on different theories concerning how children learn. Theories in child development shed light on how young learners' first and second languages develop. It is, therefore, necessary to mention about these leading theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. According to Piagetian theory for learning, the child is an active learner who constructs his or her own knowledge from working with objects and ideas, which is criticised since it underestimates the role of language in learning. On the other hand, Vygotsky's view labelled as 'sociocultural theory' concentrates on the

social context where the child lives. He argues that learning takes place in a social context where the child interacts with people around her/him. Cameron (2002:6) distinguishes between the two theories as follows:

“Whereas for Piaget the child is an active learner in a world full of objects, for Vygotsky the child is an active learner in a world full of other people.”

In a social context, a skilled individual and the child work together to achieve actions so that s/he learns to act by himself or herself. In this way, the child gains independence in acting alone. Assessment, therefore, needs to support a social context where the child collaborates with her or his teacher.

In this section, young language learners have been introduced with the advantages they have over adult language learners based on child development theories. The following section will distinguish between formative and summative assessment.

## **2.2. Assessment through Formative or Summative Way**

Assessment in foreign language teaching is carried out for the purpose of receiving feedback on our teaching so that we see strengths and weaknesses of it. Learners, on the other hand, are provided with feedback through assessment on their language performance concerning to what extent they have reached their needs or goals. What makes assessment significant is that feedback provided for learners and teachers is used for improving our teaching as teachers while improving our students' learning the target language. However, while some forms of assessment help language teachers and learners to take necessary steps to improve their performance during the process of teaching and learning, others only inform teachers and learners on the results at the end of the process without allocating time to revise where they have lacked desired performance. At this point, it is crucial to make a distinction between formative and summative assessment.

Moon (2000:152) distinguishes between formative and summative assessment as follows:

‘On-going assessment (often called formative) is what we do on a daily basis – continuously, when we intentionally look for information which will help us to see how far a pupil is making progress in line with our objectives. Overall assessment (often called summative) happens only periodically, eg at the end of a term or year or period of study. It takes place when the teacher or someone else wants to check whether pupils have achieved certain goals or targets, usually through a test or exam.’

As it is obvious from the statement above, formative assessment helps teachers provide their learners with immediate feedback on their progress, which enables language learners to see their strengths and weaknesses in the process of learning. Summative assessment also provides feedback. However, what makes formative assessment different from the other is that learners have opportunity to take into account feedback and take necessary steps to improve their weaknesses, for language learners are assessed on a continuous way. On the other hand, despite the fact that teachers make use of summative assessment while planning future instruction, they fail to capture important changes in their learners as they occur (Genesee and Upshur 2003).

How we assess our learners depends on how we believe second language is acquired by children. Therefore, second language learning theories determine how we should keep a record of our learners’ progress. As indicated in section 2.2., first language is acquired by children in a social context with the assistance of a skilled individual, which is based on the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (Mitchell and Myles 1998). Formative ways of assessment also creates a social context where language learners interact with their teachers and peers. In a classroom where learners are assessed through formative assessment, language learners collaborate with their teachers and peers whereas learners compete with their peers in an isolated atmosphere owing to the race imposed by summative assessment which makes use of traditional paper-and-pencil exams.

One of the primary aims of language assessment is to support the target language learning and teaching. However, we, as language teachers, frequently observe that language assessment through traditional paper-and-pencil exams seems to drive teaching by forcing teachers to teach what is going to be assessed, which makes learners concentrate on tasks that are important for them to succeed in language tests. Besides, traditional paper-and-pencil exams result in a mismatch between test content and

curricular aims. Rixon (1999) carried out a survey with 120 teachers and teacher trainers and found that there was a mismatch between what was being taught and how it was assessed. The survey also indicated that the content and method of assessment applied contrasted vividly with the classroom experience of children who have learnt language in a communicative way. Therefore, summative assessment through paper-and-pencil exams ignore communicative language use experienced by language learners in the classroom where they interact with their teachers and peers in a meaningful way. Learners practising the target language in authentic tasks face with unfamiliar items focusing on grammar and vocabulary. On the other hand, formative ways of assessment is congruent with what language learners experience in the classroom, which fosters language performance. Teachers aware of the importance of communicative language teaching approach tend to prefer formative ways to assess their learners so that they take into consideration fluency as well as accuracy in the target language (Bachman 2000, Edelenbos and Vinjé 2000).

Moreover, assessment through traditional paper and pencil exams are regarded as a source of anxiety for learners. Eggen and Kauchak (2001) define test anxiety as '*a relatively stable, unpleasant reaction to testing situations that lowers performance*'. Test anxiety usually stems from limited time to complete an exam, unfamiliar questions, parents' pressure on their children to succeed in tests, etc. In addition, learners may experience it due to the fact that they usually have no chance to retake the exam. Test anxiety is bound to influence language learners' performance in a negative way, which may result in negative attitudes toward learning a foreign language. Learners who fail in written exams may feel that they have no competence to learn the target language. Since foreign language education in Turkey starts at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of primary education and learners have no chance of practising the language outside their classrooms, learners' motivation to pursue their goals for language is significant for the success of foreign language education at primary schools. Learners at the 4<sup>th</sup> grade may build psychological barrier against the target language, which may affect them throughout their education. Therefore, Eggen and Kauchak (2001) suggest that language teachers prefer alternative ways of assessment for the purpose of reducing test anxiety that their learners experience.

What makes formative assessment more effective than summative assessment is that it yields a more reliable profile of a pupil's ability taking into account his/her performance throughout the term or year while giving him/her opportunity to achieve his/her goals (Hasselgreen 2000). However, summative ways of assessment deals with the performance in a particular time, which increases the risks responsible for failure in exams. For instance, learners who are ill during an examination are bound to fail, which may lead to a misinterpretation of learner's actual language performance. As a consequence, a teacher may label his/her learner as a lazy student, which discourages him/her from learning the target language.

Having drawn a distinction between formative and summative assessment and discussed the advantages of formative assessment over summative assessment, we turn our attention to alternative ways of assessment which enable language teachers to assess their learners on a continuous basis.

### **2.2.1. Portfolio Assessment**

As one of the most frequently used ways of formative assessment, portfolio is 'a purposeful collection of students' work that demonstrates to students and others their efforts, progress, and achievements in given areas' (Mullin 1998, Nunes 2004). Portfolio was first used by photographers, architects, or artists for the purpose of keeping the records of their works. Through portfolios they could monitor their performance and present it to others who are concerned with their works. In foreign language teaching portfolio has recently started to be used as a tool for an ongoing assessment of learners' language performance.

As CLT has recently gained popularity among language teachers, language teacher's and learners' role has significantly changed. This shift has necessitated a more learner-centered instruction. Thus, a paradigmatic shift in assessment has become crucial. Formative perspective in assessing learners' performance in the target language enable learners to take a more active role in the decision making process concerning their language learning goals. Through portfolio assessment, language learners become more autonomous since they determine the content of their portfolios. Gottlieb (1995)

states that portfolios allow students to assume responsibility for their own learning. By means of portfolios, language learners take the role of a subject of their own assessment rather than the role of an object of their assessment.

What makes portfolio assessment a significant tool for assessing young language learners' performance is that it provides a complete picture of a learner's performance on a continuous basis. Compared to traditional paper-and-pencil exams, portfolio enables learners to demonstrate their actual performance since it links assessment with instruction in the classroom. Traditional language assessment through written exams does not encompass all contents covered in the curriculum, which lowers 'content validity' or the correspondence between curriculum objectives and the objectives being assessed. However, portfolio promotes content validity, for portfolio contents represent what language learners are doing in the classroom (O'Malley and Pierce 1996). Moreover, portfolios used as a formative assessment tool enable learners to show what they can actually do in authentic situations rather than what they can recall while having tests in a limited amount of time (Ghaith 2002).

Learning a foreign language is a long and complex task. When the target language is taught at an early age, motivation is regarded as a key factor in the achievement of our teaching. If language learners feel secure in the target language, their motivation for learning the language goes up. No matter what we use as an assessment tool, learners experience anxiety while assessing their performance. If anxiety they experience results in bad performance in tests, it is bound to affect their motivation in a negative way. However, since formative assessment through learner portfolios concentrate on the whole term performances of learners, learners have the opportunity to demonstrate their performance in anxiety-free conditions.

The findings based on the research by Barootchi and Keshavarz (2002) indicate that portfolio assessment contributes to learners' achievement and their feeling of responsibility towards monitoring their progress. It also reveals that portfolio assessment scores correlates significantly with those of teacher-made written exams, which suggests that inter-rater reliability is achieved. Therefore, Barootchi and Keshavarz (2002) conclude that portfolio assessment can be used in conjunction with

teacher-made tests to provide the continuous measurement of students' growth in the target language.

Language teachers who use portfolio assessment also help their learners assess themselves and their peers. The following sections give detailed information on these two alternative tools that promote learners' portfolios: peer assessment and self-assessment.

### **2.2.2. Self-Assessment**

In the era of modern language teaching, the roles of the participants in the classroom have significantly changed. The teacher who had the role of an instructor as a source of language in the traditional approach to teaching of English has the role of a facilitator helping learners find best ways of learning how to learn. On the other hand, language learners have gained more responsibility for their own learning recently. As Brown (2001) points out, while the teacher in the role of a controller is in charge of every moment in the classroom determining what to teach and how to assess learner performance, the teacher as a facilitator provides opportunities for learners to be more autonomous by giving them a chance of determining their goals for the target language. Furthermore, learners share the responsibility for assessing the language performance with their teachers. That is, language learners have the opportunity to assess their own language learning process, which is called self-assessment.

To comprehend the reason for the importance of self-assessment in language teaching, it is significant to know Vygotsky's views of development which is labelled 'sociocultural theory'. According to Vygotsky, learning takes place in a social atmosphere where a child interacts with skilled individuals, which helps him/her to learn (Mitchell and Myles 1994). The child who is other-regulated carries out tasks under the guidance of a skilled individual, so that s/he learns to be independent. Thus, s/he needs someone to learn the language or to be assessed for his performance in the target language. However, when the child becomes self-regulated, s/he carries out learning tasks independently. Having achieved being a self-regulated learner, the child

is ready to take part in the process of assessment sharing the responsibility for learning the language with his/her teacher.

Through self-assessment language learners gain more responsibility for monitoring their own language learning processes, which provides opportunities for them to be more autonomous in learning the target language. Learners aware of their needs for learning a foreign language set their own goals which will be monitored by them so as to see to what extent they have reached these goals through self-assessment (Rea-Dickins 2000).

Language teachers have several instruments for their learners to assess their own performance in the target language. Rating scales, checklists, and learner diaries can be used to help language learners monitor and assess their own language learning processes, which fosters learner autonomy. However, as Todd (2002) indicates, these instruments may result in subjective results, for the answers learners provide may be based on unreasonable perceptions, which may mislead both the teachers and the learners.

For the purpose of promoting learner autonomy through self assessment, portfolio can also be applied. Language learners who prepare portfolios become sensitive to their needs. They can acquire the skills necessary to determine if their work meets their expectations and, as a result, learn how to set reasonable goals for learning English (Smolen *et.al.* 1995). Having set his/her goals, language learners take responsibility for making decisions concerning what is good, what needs to be improved, etc. Cameron (2002:233) states the advantages of self-assessment in language learning as follows:

- ‘Through self-assessment:
- learners can understand more about the learning process,
  - learners can be motivated towards more involvement in their learning,
  - learners can understand more about individual pupils,
  - learners will be better prepared to carry on learning beyond the classroom,
  - a more equal relationship is created between teachers and learners.’

The research conducted by McNamara and Deane (1995) revealed that self-assessment tools such as an English portfolio support traditional measures and they



argue that they have more complete picture of their students' ability, effort, and progress. They also add that students have a greater voice in their language learning process.

In spite of the fact that self-assessment enhances the process of language learning for learners, most teachers may criticize it arguing that it is based on subjective comments of language learners. However, Todd (2002) suggests that concrete questions like '*to what extent has your knowledge of vocabulary improved? List the new words you have learnt from your portfolio.*' can be developed in order to prevent learners from relying on their intuition while assessing their own portfolios.

### **2.2.3. Peer-Assessment**

Foreign language teaching has recently witnessed a paradigmatic shift from a teacher-centred approach to a more learner-centred approach which increased language learners' involvement in the process of decision-making concerning their language learning. Language teachers having given all their attention to teaching the grammar of the target language became aware of the fact that learners lack communicative skills, which brought to mind "CLT". This paradigmatic shift has influenced our views of how we assess language learners. Having considered traditional pencil-and-paper exams as the only way to assess language learners so far, language teachers has begun to use authentic ways of assessment giving more autonomy to their learners. Peer-assessment gained popularity among language teachers who apply portfolio as a way of assessing language performance of their learners on a continuous basis.

As stated previously (see section 2.6.), language is acquired in a social context where a child interacts with older members of the society s/he lives in so as to meet his or her personal needs. The skilled individual interacting with the child monitors him or her and provides, in Bruner's terms, '*scaffolded help*' so that s/he becomes autonomous in acting on his/her own (Cameron 2002). Innovative perspectives in Second Language Acquisition provide new insights into the necessity of peer-assessment in learning and teaching the target language. While assessing their peers' portfolios, skilled learners can scaffold their peers so that they improve their performance in the target language.

Through peer-assessment, learners take charge of their peers' progress by monitoring them. As our primary focus in modern language teaching is to pursue learner autonomy, learners' assessing each other is one of the key factors in fostering it. Ioannou-Georgiou and Pavlou (2003:10) points out the advantages of peer-assessment as follows:

'Peer-assessment can positively influence the classroom atmosphere because children learn to respect and accept each other through assessing each other's work. Peer-assessment fosters the feeling that the classroom is a community working towards the same goal. Over time, this sense of community carries over into other classroom activities as well. It minimizes the negative aspects of competition and encourages trust among children.'

As it is clear from the statement above, peer-assessment helps language teachers construct a supportive atmosphere where learners collaborate to reach their personal goals rather than compete with their peers. In addition, young language learners gain authentic insights into their strengths and weaknesses in the target language comparing their work with their peers while monitoring each other's. While assessing their peers' work, learners can get new ideas about what to incorporate in their portfolios. Finally, language learners monitoring each other on a continuous basis through portfolio can develop a better understanding of each other's ability in the target language, so that they can gradually assist each other much better. As the basic aim of formative assessment is to improve learners on an ongoing way, through peer-assessment we as language teachers can share our responsibility to assess language performance with our learners so that they have a say in the process of assessment, which promotes learner autonomy.

This chapter has provided in-dept information on the literature concerning young language learners and alternative ways of assessment that can be applied in foreign language classrooms. The following chapter deals with the methodology used in this study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

The aim of this chapter is to describe the design of the study implemented, the subjects participating in the study, the data collection instruments employed, the data collection procedures followed, and the data analysis applied.

The study aims to explore how young language learners perceive the process of assessment in language learning. Therefore, the study requires young language learners' points of view by means of a learner questionnaire and interview. In this chapter, all the processes while carrying out the study will be dealt with in a detailed way.

#### **3.1. The Design of the Study**

Social sciences have recently witnessed a paradigmatic shift from quantitative research toward qualitative research, which has been widely employed in applied linguistics. Nunan (2005) points out that qualitative research is concerned with understanding human behaviour from the actor's frame of reference, which requires the research to be carried out in a naturalistic and uncontrolled manner. Since qualitative research enables the data to be presented from the perspective of the subjects, the cultural and intellectual biases of the researcher does not distort the collection, interpretation, or presentation of the data (Seliger and Shohamy 1989).

In order to gain insight into the participants' perspectives on the research issue clearly defined in the first chapter, the qualitative research model was adopted, which determined the elicitation techniques to be used to gather the data. Thus, depending on the model of the research, a learner questionnaire and interview were constructed. In order to analyse the data obtained from the learner questionnaire, quantitative research model was also adopted.

### **3.2. The Context of the Study**

The present study was carried out in a public primary school, which was located in the region where a new settlement sector was constructed after the earthquake in 1999 in Duzce. The primary school was chosen as the context of the study because the study aimed to investigate young language learners' perspectives on assessment. Opened in 2003, Bilgi Primary School was established as a curriculum laboratory school. Compared to traditional public schools where all courses are performed in one class, Bilgi Primary School creates mobility for the students since courses are performed in their own classrooms designed according to the needs of the courses. Therefore, the students attend English course in the foreign language laboratory where they are exposed to the target language by means of charts, pictures, tape recorder, etc. Furthermore, almost all the students have the opportunity to participate in the course more than once, for each class consists of between 15 and 23 students.

Under the legislation of an eight year compulsory and continuous education adopted in 1997, primary and secondary schools in Turkey were integrated. After the integration of two types of school, the first part offers a five year education which aims to make students acquire basic skills on Turkish, Maths, Physical Education, etc. As Turkey has a target of being a member state of the European Union, English was adopted as a foreign language starting from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. The second part of primary school education offering a three year education, on the other hand, focuses more on developing academic skills by presenting Maths, Science, Turkish, History, etc. While English is given for two hours a week in the first part of primary education, it is given for four hours a week in the second part.

The assessment of the students' performances on the target language was carried out mostly in a summative way by means of written and oral exams according to the Regulation of Primary Education. Because the materials used were grammar-based, most of the weekly class hours were devoted to the teaching of grammatical aspects of English, which determined the scope of the assessment. Limited-response tasks such as filling in the blanks, matching, transforming were frequently preferred in assessing the language performances of the learners.

### 3.3. Participants

As stated above, the present study was carried out in a primary school where the target language was taught under the regulations of the Ministry of National Education. Since the present study is concerned with young language learners' attitudes towards assessment, 150 young learners from the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grades took part in the study. The subjects were 15 boys and 14 girls from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 14 boys and 17 girls from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, 17 boys and 23 girls from the 6<sup>th</sup> grade, and 30 boys and 20 girls from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. The age range of the participants varied from 10 to 13.

The 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders who took part in the study had a two hour English course under the eight year compulsory and continuous education legislation adopted in 1997. As foreign language teaching starts from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade of public primary schools in Turkey, the 4<sup>th</sup> graders had no experience in English. The 5<sup>th</sup> graders, on the other hand, had a one year experience in the target language. Due to the fact that there was a shortage of an additional English teacher who had a certificate for teaching in public schools, an undergraduate student attending ELT programme at the Open Education Faculty of Anadolu University was authorized to give English courses to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

Compared to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders, the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders had more class hours devoted to foreign language teaching. They had a four hour English course a week, which provided them with much more exposure to the target language. Therefore, they were familiar with the basic sentence structures requiring tense knowledge.

The assessment of the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders was carried out through written and oral exams in a summative way. The students had two written and two oral exams each term. The exams generally focused on grammatical aspects of the target language. In addition to summative ways of assessing the language performances of the learners, portfolio was applied to them in the light of the research issues. On the other hand, the 7<sup>th</sup> graders were only assessed by means of three written and two oral exams each term. The procedures and techniques to be used in assessing students in public primary schools are determined under the regulation of primary education.

### **3.4. Data Collection Instruments**

It is generally accepted that deciding on the most appropriate data collection instruments is a demanding task for the researcher. Depending on the purpose of a research, data collection instruments vary. While some studies obtain their data by means of a picture, diagram, or standardized tests, some obtain their data by means of questionnaires, surveys, or interviews. After having reviewed the literature on second language acquisition research, the elicitation techniques were decided. In order to increase the reliability of the study, the researcher used two data collection instruments: a learner questionnaire and an interview.

#### **3.4.1 Questionnaire as a Data Collection Instrument**

Questionnaires are relatively popular means of obtaining data while carrying out a study in second language teaching since they are easy to construct. In addition, questionnaires enable the researcher to apply it to large groups in a quick way compared to other elicitation techniques. Therefore, a learner questionnaire was constructed in order to investigate the perspectives of young language learners toward assessment in language learning.

##### **3.4.1.1. Piloting of the Questionnaire**

Before administering the questionnaire to the whole group, it is necessary for the researcher to test the quality and suitability of the elicitation techniques to be used by carrying out a pilot study with a representative group of participants. Nunan (2005) states that it is imperative to pilot any questionnaire for the purpose of eluding the trap of collecting the data and then realizing that the question was asked in a way which cannot be analyzed to answer the question. Thus, with the aim of eluding the traps stated by Nunan (2005) a pilot study was carried out, so that the researcher could get feedback on the items which would be misunderstood. Then, the researcher could make

necessary adjustments on items. The pilot study also helped the researcher to determine the time required beforehand.

The researcher administered the questionnaire to 40 young language learners from each grade involved in the present study. Those who took part in the pilot study were selected by convenience sampling method. Having piloted the questionnaire, the researcher obtained feedback from the participants and made necessary adjustments on the items having been found difficult to respond. In addition, the researcher observed that the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders needed more time to respond the questionnaire than the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders did, which made it necessary for the researcher to devote more time to the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders in the application of the questionnaire.

#### **3.4.1.2. Learner Questionnaire**

Having piloted the questionnaire with 40 young learners, the researcher revised and administered it to 150 participants. The participants were asked to respond 21 items (see Appendix A). However, each participant provided his/her grade, age, and gender on the first page of the questionnaire beforehand.

The questionnaire was administered in participants' native language due to the fact that they did not have enough proficiency in their foreign language to comprehend and respond to the items. Despite the fact that the questionnaire was constructed in their native language, it was also simplified taking into consideration the cognitive characteristics of young learners. To attract the participants and keep the attention of them on the questionnaire two well-known cartoon characters, Tom and Jerry, were used.

In the learner questionnaire, the participants were asked to circle the answer they preferred after reading each item. Here the participants circled the "smiling face" if they agreed with the statement. If they disagreed with the statement they circled the "sulking face". A selected response form was preferred since the participants could have difficulty in comprehending scaled responses.

The 21 item questionnaire is composed of 5 parts investigating different aspects of the present study.

The following section describes these parts providing a sample statement for each part.

- 1. Items related to assessment:** The aim of these items which are divided into two sections as formative and summative assessment is to investigate the attitudes of young learners of English toward assessment process.

**Items related to Formative Assessment:** This section aiming to investigate young language learners' perspectives on formative way of assessment is composed of three items. (Items 3, 4, 7)

*Sample: Item 7- 'I want my success to be assessed for the entire term.'*

**Items related to Summative Assessment:** In this section, it is aimed to explore what young language learners think of summative assessment which is carried out by means of written exams. (Items 5, 6, 13)

*Sample: Item 13- 'I think that my teacher will be able to make accurate judgment about me with a single exam.'*

- 2. Items related to Test Anxiety:** The aim of this section is to obtain young learners' perspectives on test anxiety. The two items investigate if the participants feel anxious when being assessed by means of written exams or portfolios they prepare during the term. (Items 1, 2)

*Sample: Item1- 'I feel anxious before and during examinations'*

- 3. Items related to Portfolio Assessment:** Items concerned with portfolio assessment investigates young learners' attitudes toward portfolio they prepare on a continuous basis. 8 items explore different aspects of it. (Items 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 21)

*Sample: Item 11- 'I go on learning with my portfolio outside school hours.'*



- 4. Item related to Self-Assessment:** The aim of this section which is composed of one item is to obtain the participants' views on self-assessment by which language learner monitors his/her performance preparing a portfolio. (Item 8)

*Sample: Item 8- 'I think that I can monitor my own progress with the help of my portfolio.'*

- 5. Items related to Peer-Assessment:** This section which is composed of 4 items tries to explore the attitudes of young language learners' toward assessment which is carried out by their classmates. The items also explore the significance of feedback for young learners. (Items 15, 17, 18, 20)

*Sample: Item 15- 'I make use of my friends' ideas by sharing my portfolio with them.'*

### **3.4.2. Interview as a Data Collection Instrument**

Interview is a widely used elicitation technique in applied linguistics. It is frequently preferred by second language acquisition researchers who want to observe how learners acquire the target language. However, interviews are used as a complementary tool with questionnaires, as well. The data based on interviews enable the researcher to elicit more detailed information about the reasons of the participants' responses on questionnaire items, which can clarify the vague points.

In the present study, the researcher constructed a semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview was preferred because it creates a flexible atmosphere for both the researcher and the participants. Nunan (2005: 150) indicates the advantages of a semi-structured interview as follows:

*"The advantages of the semi-structured interview are, in the first instance, that it gives the interviewee a degree of power and control over the course of the interview. Secondly, it gives the interviewer a great deal of flexibility. Finally, and most profoundly, this form of interview gives one privileged access to other people's lives."*

Having decided on the form of the interview, the researcher focused on the issues which emerged during the analysis of the questionnaire, which helped the researcher to form the questions to be asked based on the objectives of the study.

#### **3.4.2.1. Piloting of the Interview**

As stated before, piloting of an elicitation tool with a small sample of subjects is very significant since it provides the researcher with feedback on the tool applied before being used for research. Nunan (2005) argues that piloting of an interview gives the researcher the opportunity to eliminate any questions which may be ambiguous or confusing to the interviewee.

In the present study, the interview was piloted with 8 young language learners from 4 grades. The issues which arose from the learner questionnaire formed the basis of interview questions. The participants were asked if they had any difficulties understanding the questions. In addition, it was noticed that the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders needed more time to answer the questions. Having received feedback on the questions, the researcher made necessary modifications on unclear questions.

#### **3.4.2.2. Learner Interview**

With the aim of investigating the issues arising from the learner questionnaire, 24 young language learners from 4 grades were interviewed. Based on the objectives of the study and the data obtained from the questionnaire, a semi-structured interview was employed since it would create a flexible atmosphere for the participants to express their opinions without limiting them with predetermined questions. Furthermore, the researcher would have the opportunity to gain new ideas which was not included in the questionnaire.

The interview was conducted in the participants' native language, Turkish as they did not have a good command of the target language. However, the native language was also simplified due to the cognitive characteristics of the participants.

Terminological words such as peer/self-assessment, formative/summative assessment were rephrased in concrete terms.

The learner interview, which lasted about 45 minutes, was tape-recorded because of its advantages over note-taking.

### **3.5. Data Collection Procedures**

This section gives detailed information on the procedures followed by the researcher while gathering the data by means of the instruments employed.

Before conducting the study in the public primary school, it was compulsory to get authorization from the MNE. Therefore, the researcher applied to the MNE for authorization to carry out the study in the Bilgi Primary School at the beginning of the first term. After obtaining the authorization, the researcher started the first phase of the study. At the beginning of the first term, the participants were informed about the course objectives and assessment procedures. The 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders were asked to prepare a portfolio which would include their work on the subject of the week. Portfolio assessment was one way of assessing the participants on a continuous basis.

Having completed the first phase of the study, the researcher decided on the elicitation techniques to be used in the study. As stated earlier, the main data collection instrument was the learner questionnaire composed of 21 items. Having piloted it, the researcher made necessary modifications and administered it to 150 young language learners. As the study involved 4 grades where English was taught as a foreign language, the questionnaire was administered in 4 sessions. Each session lasted about 40 minutes, which was equal to one class hour. Before distributing the questionnaires to the classes for which the researcher as teacher was not responsible, the researcher introduced himself. The researcher explained the nature of the research and the purpose of the questionnaire to the participants after handing out the learner questionnaires. The participants were asked to write their classes, ages, and genders on the first page of the questionnaire. However, they were not required to write their names. The researcher stated that their responses to the items were very significant for the study to be healthy. Because some of the items were constructed for the 7<sup>th</sup> graders, the younger learners

were notified that they were only required to answer the first items if there were two options. However, the 7<sup>th</sup> graders were told that they had to answer the second item if there were two options.

The second data collection instrument as a supplement to the learner questionnaire was a semi-structured interview. In order to gain in-dept insight into the participants' responses to the items on the questionnaire, the learner interview was conducted in four sessions with 4 grades. Before each session began, the interviewees were informed on the purpose of the interview. The interview sessions were conducted sitting side-by-side with the interviewees in order to convey the message that the interaction was meant to be cooperative rather than confrontational, which is recommended by Nunan (2005). The physical positioning of the researcher and the interviewees was beneficial for reducing anxiety of the interviewees.

### **3.6. Data Analysis**

Having constructed, piloted, and administered the elicitation instruments mentioned above, the researcher moved to the next stage of the study: to analyse the data obtained.

For the purpose of getting insight into young language learners' perspectives on assessment, the data obtained by means of the learner questionnaire plays an important role. The data from the learner questionnaire was computed according to scales depending on the participants' grades and genders. After that, the data was described in the form of percentages. In addition, the data from each item was presented on a bar graph and frequency table.

Having analysed the data gathered by means of the learner questionnaire, the researcher went on to analyse the learner interview by listening to the tape-recorded sessions, which enabled the researcher to group the interview data into categories based on the research questions. The data from the learner interview are presented in the form of anecdotal notes when and where necessary to support the data from the learner questionnaire in the discussion chapter.

This chapter provided in-dept information on the methodological aspects of the study such as the context where the study was carried out, the participants involved, and the data collection instruments employed, etc. The following chapter deals with the presentation of the results gathered by means of the learner questionnaire.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESULTS**

The present study is aimed at investigating the perspectives of young learners of English in the primary school toward assessment process.

In this chapter the results obtained from the learner questionnaire which is composed of 21 items are presented. Each item is presented in graphs which demonstrate the percentages of the participants' responses. In addition, the frequency tables which show the number of responses to the items are included with the aim of supporting the graphs.

Section 4.2. presents the results obtained from the items related to assessment itself, which is composed of two subcategories, formative and summative assessment. In section 4.3., the results of the data obtained from the items related to test anxiety are presented. The results concerning portfolio assessment are provided in section 4.4. Section 4.5. provides the analysis of the data which is related to self-assessment. Finally, in section 4.6., the results of the data concerning peer-assessment are included.

#### **4.1. Items related to Assessment**

This sections aims to present the results obtained from the following 6 items concerning young learners' insights about assessment. Here the items are divided into two parts: formative and summative assessment.

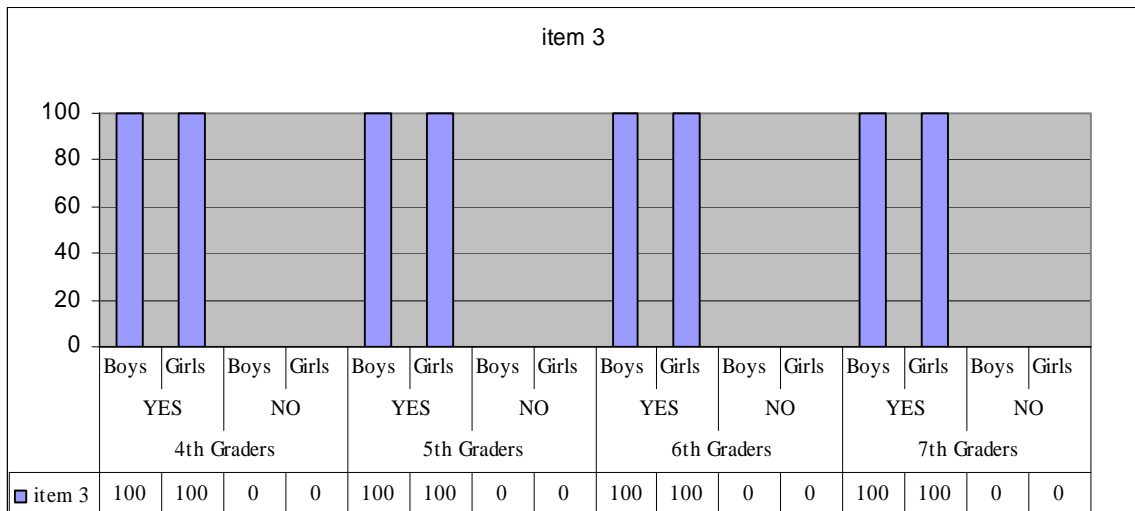
##### **4.1.1. Formative Assessment**

Attitudes of the participants towards formative assessment are investigated through 3 items. The results obtained from the items 3, 4, and 7 in learner questionnaire reflect young learners' insights about formative assessment.

**Item 3: I want my teacher to give me feedback after an exam so that I can correct my mistakes.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 3 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 1 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 3.**



**Table 1 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 3.**

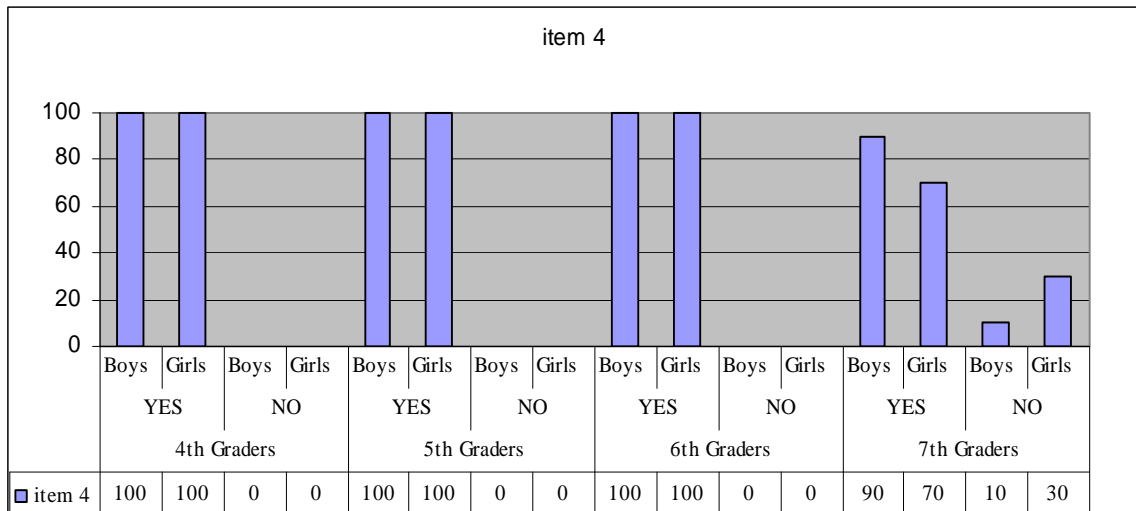
Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	15	100	0	0	14	100	0	0
5th graders	14	100	0	0	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	30	100	0	0	20	100	0	0

On looking at the values given above we see that all the participants in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, and 7<sup>th</sup> grade say that they want their teachers to give them feedback after an exam so that they can correct their mistakes, which indicates that young language learners are aware of the importance of feedback on their language learning process.

**Item 4: I do not think that I show my actual success on written exams.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 4 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 2 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 4.**



**Table 2 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 4.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	15	100	0	0	14	100	0	0
5th graders	14	100	0	0	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	27	90	3	10	14	70	6	30

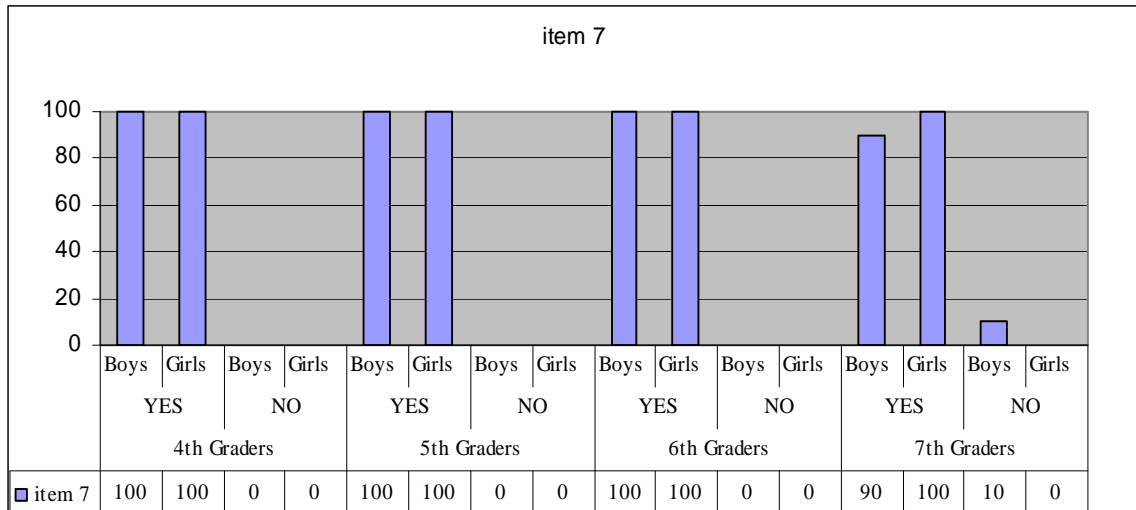
According to the values presented on graph illustrated above, all the participants in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grades tend to believe that they do not show their actual success on written exams. On the other hand 10% of boys and 30% of girls from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade do not agree with the statement, which means they show their actual success on written exams.



**Item 7: I want my success to be assessed for the entire term.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 7 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 3 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 7.**



**Table 3 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 7.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	15	100	0	0	14	100	0	0
5th graders	14	100	0	0	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	27	90	3	10	20	100	0	0

In spite of the fact that 10% of boys in 7<sup>th</sup> grade do not support the idea that the teacher should assess their success for the entire term, a great deal of learners agree with the item and state that they want their teachers to assess them in a formative way taking into account the process they pass through.

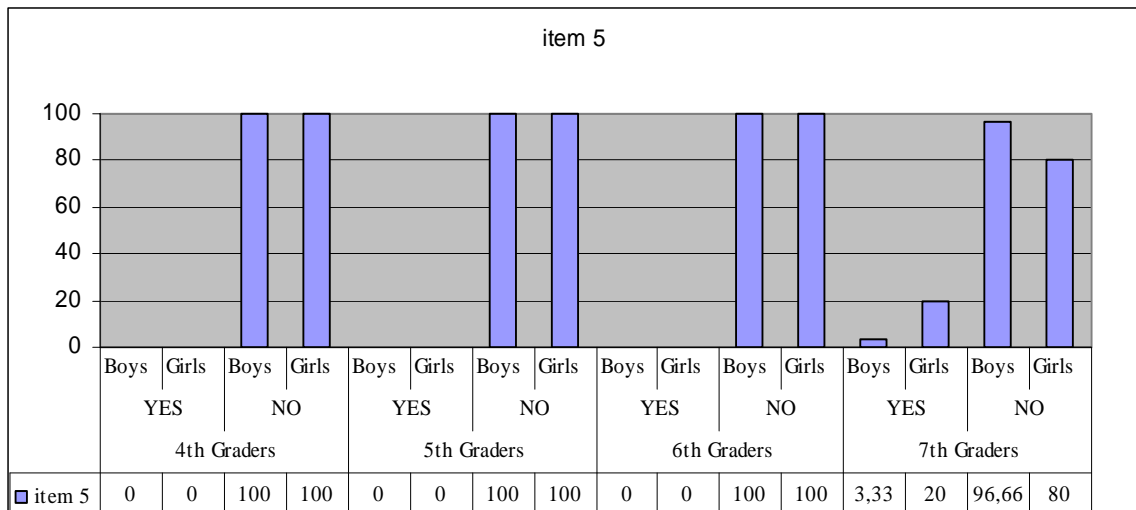
### 4.1.2. Summative Assessment

Attitudes of the participants towards summative assessment are investigated through 3 items. The results obtained from the items 5, 6, and 13 in learner questionnaire reflect young learners' insights about summative assessment.

#### Item 5: I want my teacher to assess me only by means of written exams.

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 5 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 4 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 5.**



**Table 4 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 5.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	0	0	15	100	0	0	14	100
5th graders	0	0	14	100	0	0	17	100
6th graders	0	0	17	100	0	0	23	100
7th graders	1	3.33	29	96.66	4	20	16	80

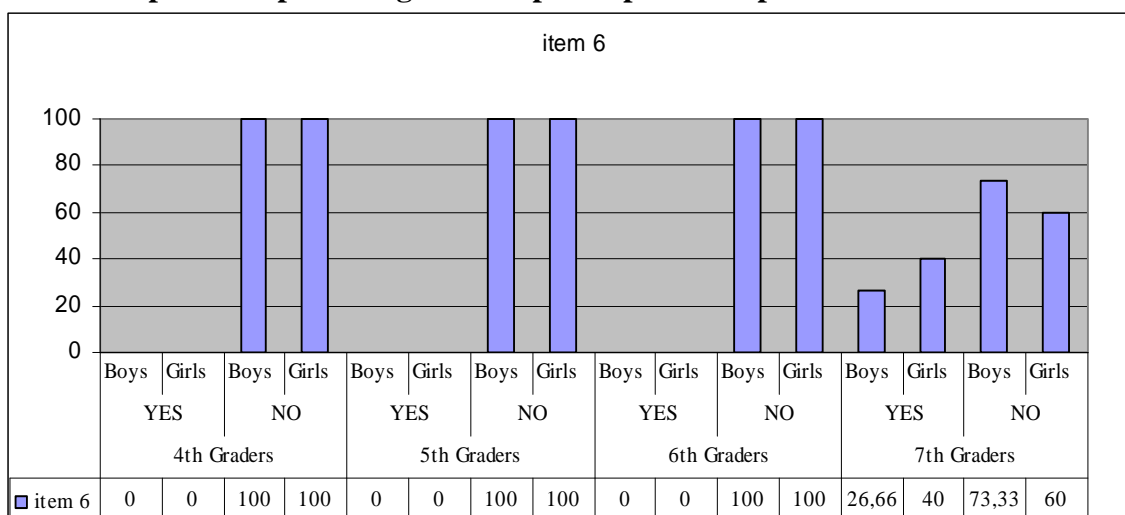
The findings seem to indicate that 100% of young learners of English in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> grades do not prefer their teachers to assess them only by means of written exams

whereas 3,33% of boys and 20% of girls in 7<sup>th</sup> grade agree with the statement. However, the findings demonstrate that an overwhelming majority of the participants want their teachers to use other ways of assessment supporting written exams.

**Item 6: I think that written exams carried out during the term are enough for me to show my success.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 6 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 5 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 6.**



**Table 5 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 6.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	0	0	15	100	0	0	14	100
5th graders	0	0	14	100	0	0	17	100
6th graders	0	0	17	100	0	0	23	100
7th graders	8	26.66	22	73.33	8	40	12	60

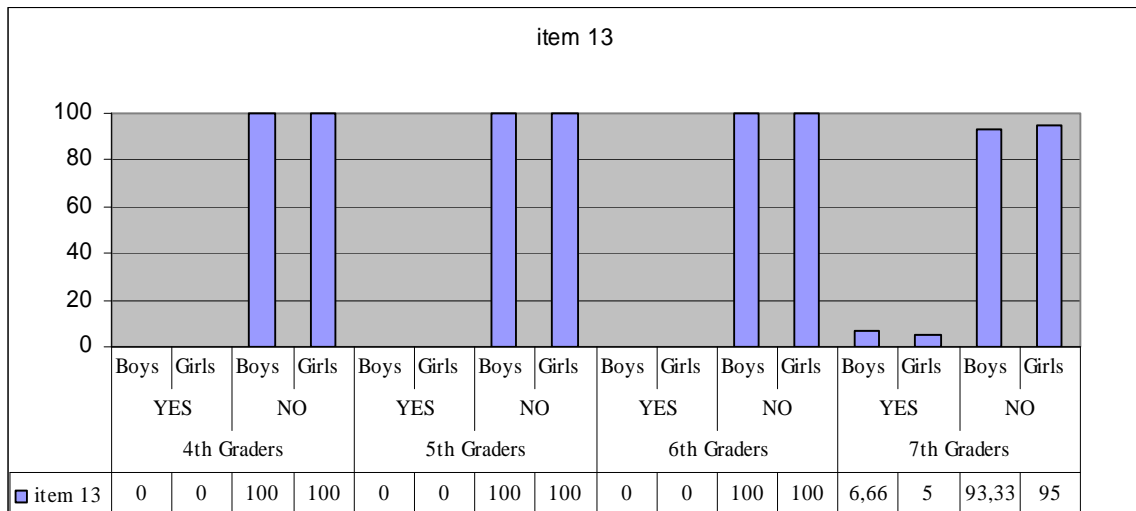
A great deal of students' responses seems to indicate that written exams carried out during the term are not enough for the learners to show their success. However, the percentage of students in 7<sup>th</sup> grade who agree with the item is lower than the other

grades. 26,66% of boys and 40% of girls in 7<sup>th</sup> grade tend to agree with the item which suggests that written exams are satisfying for enabling them to show their success.

**Item 13: I think that my teacher will be able to make accurate judgment about me with a single exam.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 13 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 6 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 13.**



**Table 6 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 13.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	0	0	15	100	0	0	14	100
5th graders	0	0	14	100	0	0	17	100
6th graders	0	0	17	100	0	0	23	100
7th graders	2	6.66	28	93.33	1	5	19	95

According to the findings presented on graph 6, an overwhelming majority of learners state that their teacher will not be able to make accurate judgment about their performances on a single exam, which means that most of the participants are critical about the judgment based on a single exam. As seen above, only 5% of girls and 6,66% of boys tend to have positive attitude to the item.

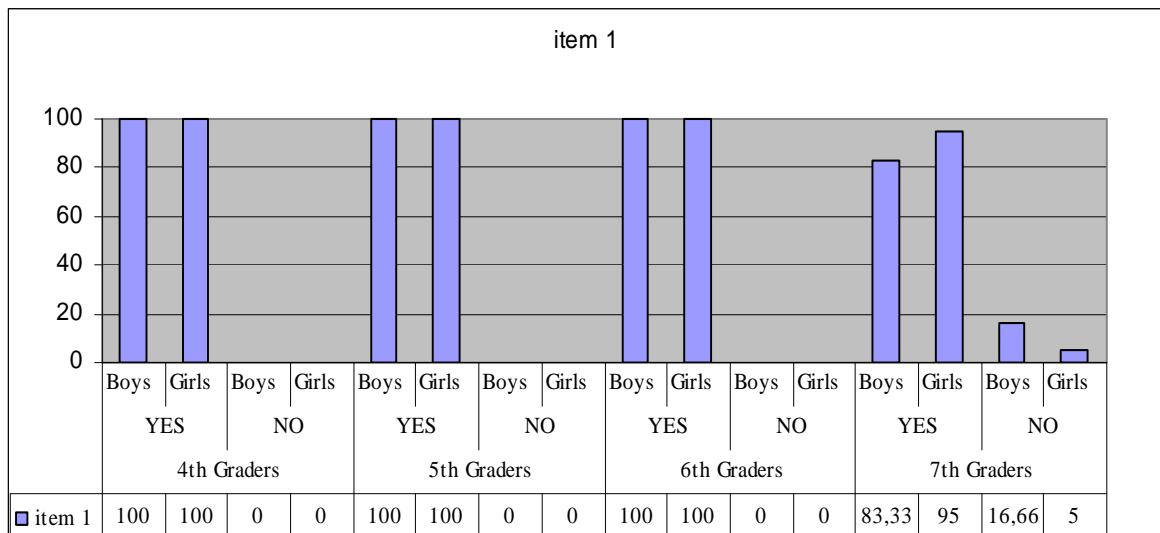
## 4.2. Items related to Test Anxiety

The items presented under the term, test anxiety, aims to investigate young language learners' perspectives about anxiety which is the consequence of written examinations. The results obtained from the items 1 and 2 in learner questionnaire reflect young language learners' perspectives on test anxiety they feel before or during exams. The first item aims to investigate if learners feel anxious before or during examinations. The second one, which includes optional item for the 7<sup>th</sup> graders who do not prepare portfolio for their assessment, aims to provide an insight into the effect of portfolio assessment on language learners' anxiety resulting from assessment process.

### Item 1: I feel anxious before and during examinations.

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 1 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 7 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 1.**



**Table 7 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 1.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	15	100	0	0	14	100	0	0
5th graders	14	100	0	0	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	25	83.33	5	16.66	19	95	1	5

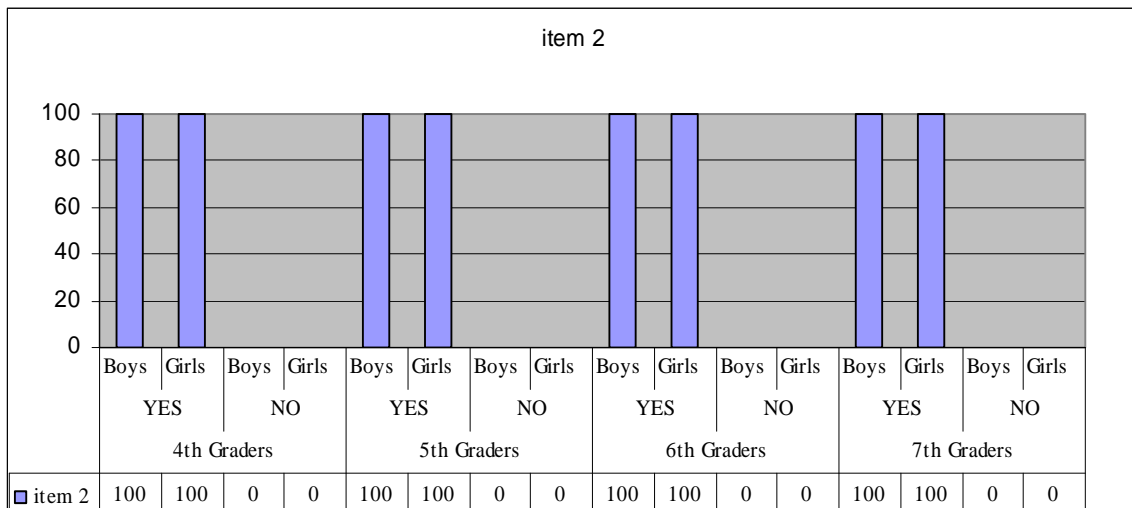
As it is shown on graph 7, almost all of the young learners agree with the statement that they feel anxious before and during written exams. However, 12% of the 7<sup>th</sup> graders do not agree with the statement, which appears to mean that written exams do not lead to test anxiety for them.

**Item 2: a) I do not feel anxious while preparing portfolio.**

**b) I would not feel anxious if I prepared portfolio**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 2 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 8 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 2.**



**Table 8 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 2.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	15	100	0	0	14	100	0	0
5th graders	14	100	0	0	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	30	100	0	0	20	100	0	0

The values given above suggest that all young learners who are between the 4th and 6<sup>th</sup> grades think that they do not feel anxious while preparing their portfolios. Similar to the results obtained from the learners between the 4th and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, 100% of the 7th grade language learners, who are familiar with portfolio; but do not prepare it, believe that they would not feel anxious if they prepared portfolio.

#### **4.3. Items related to Portfolio Assessment**

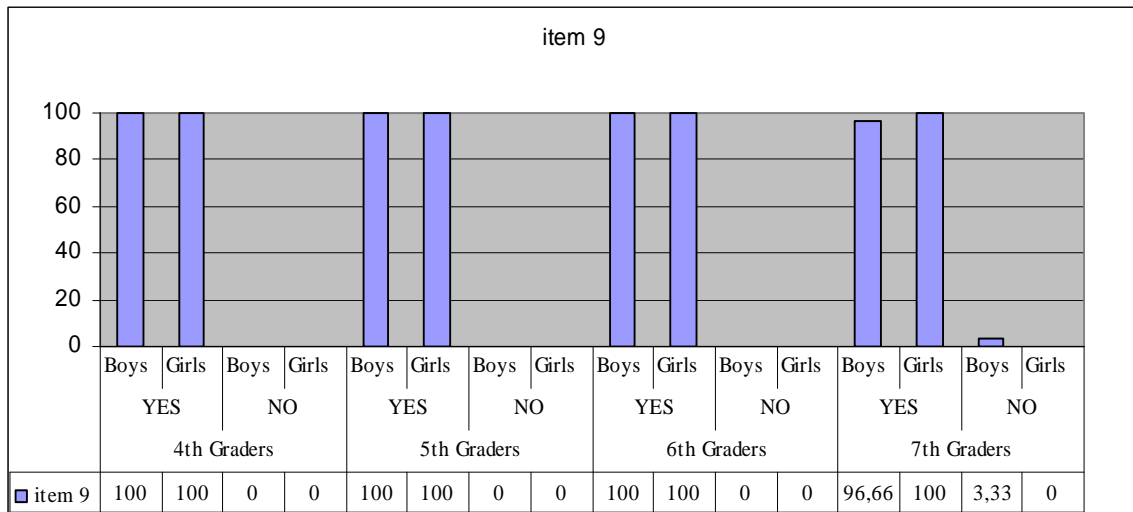
The items presented under the term, portfolio assessment, aims to obtain young language learners' perspectives about portfolio which is used to assess their language performance on an ongoing basis as mentioned in Chapter 2. Items 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 19, 21 in learner questionnaire are designed to investigate whether or not portfolio contributes to language learning of the participants. Items 9, 12, 14, 19, 21 include an optional item for the 7<sup>th</sup> graders to provide their views.

**Item 9: a) I think that my teacher will be objective while assessing my portfolio.**

**b) I would think that my teacher will be objective while assessing my portfolio.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 9 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 9 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 9.**



**Table 9 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 9.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	15	100	0	0	14	100	0	0
5th graders	14	100	0	0	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	29	96.66	1	3.33	20	100	0	0

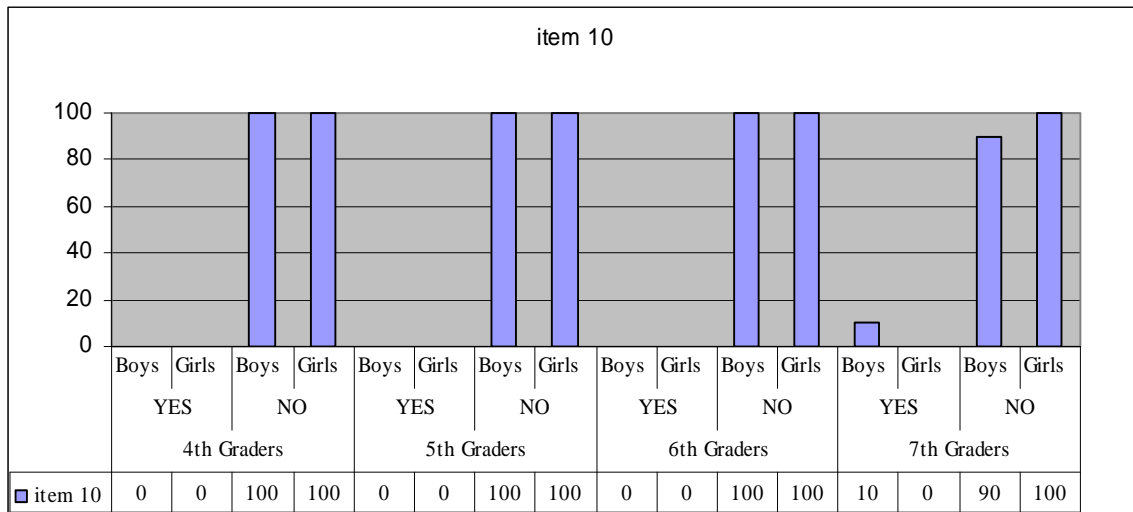
The values given above show that an overwhelming majority of the participants are confident of their teachers' objective judgment on their learning. Only one learner in 7<sup>th</sup> grade thinks that the teacher will be subjective while assessing his/her work.

**Item 10: I do not think that a portfolio is useful for us.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 10 in the questionnaire.



**Graph 10 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 10.**



**Table 10 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 10.**

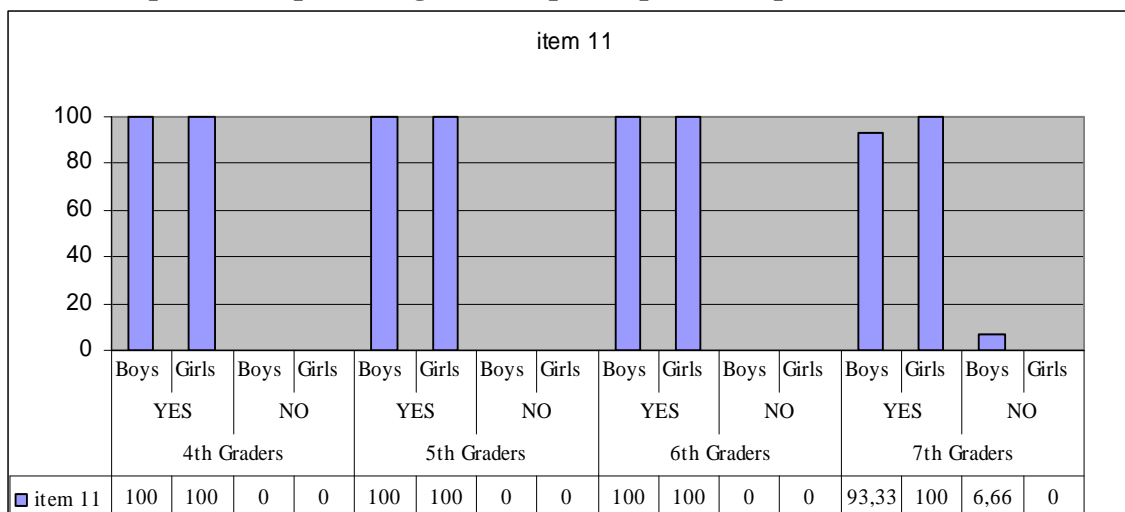
Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	0	0	15	100	0	0	14	100
5th graders	0	0	14	100	0	0	17	100
6th graders	0	0	17	100	0	0	23	100
7th graders	3	10	27	90	0	0	20	100

When looking at the percentages obtained from item 10 which questions the usefulness of portfolio from the participants' perspective, we see that young learners whose age varies from 10 to 13 find portfolio useful. Only 10% of boys in 7<sup>th</sup> grade have negative opinion towards portfolio.

**Item 11: I go on learning with my portfolio outside school hours.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 11 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 11 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 11.**



**Table 11 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 11.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	15	100	0	0	14	100	0	0
5th graders	14	100	0	0	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	28	93.33	2	6.66	20	100	0	0

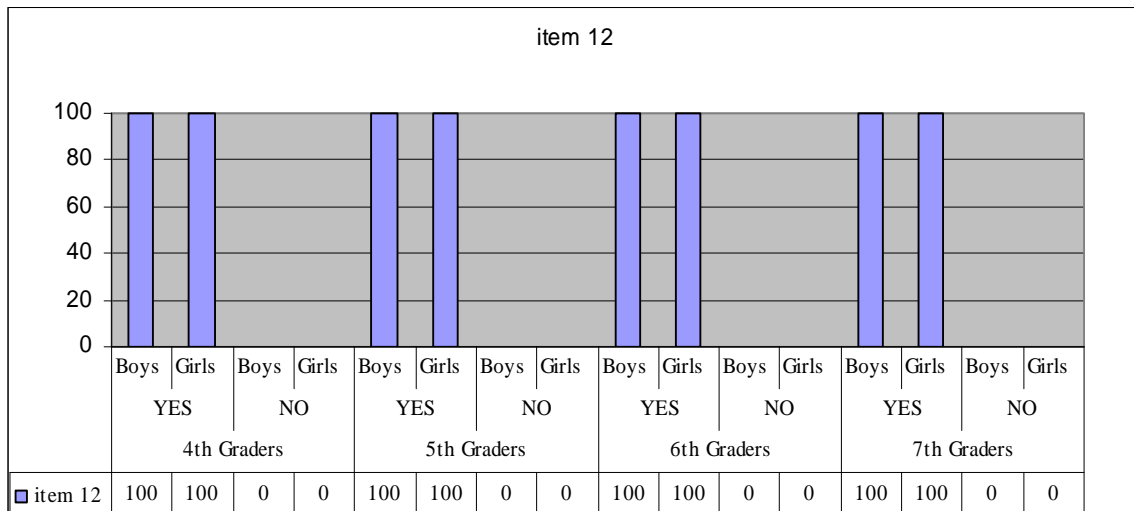
The responses of 150 young language learners tend to show that almost all of the young language learners agree with the statement which indicates that they go on learning outside their school hours preparing their portfolios. As seen in the graph above, only two 7<sup>th</sup> graders appear to disagree with the statement. From the results presented above, portfolio is believed to promote continuous learning of the target language by the majority of the participants.

**Item 12: a) A portfolio encourages me to learn.**

**b) A portfolio would encourage me to learn.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 12 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 12 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 12.**



**Table 12 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 12.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	15	100	0	0	14	100	0	0
5th graders	14	100	0	0	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	30	100	0	0	20	100	0	0

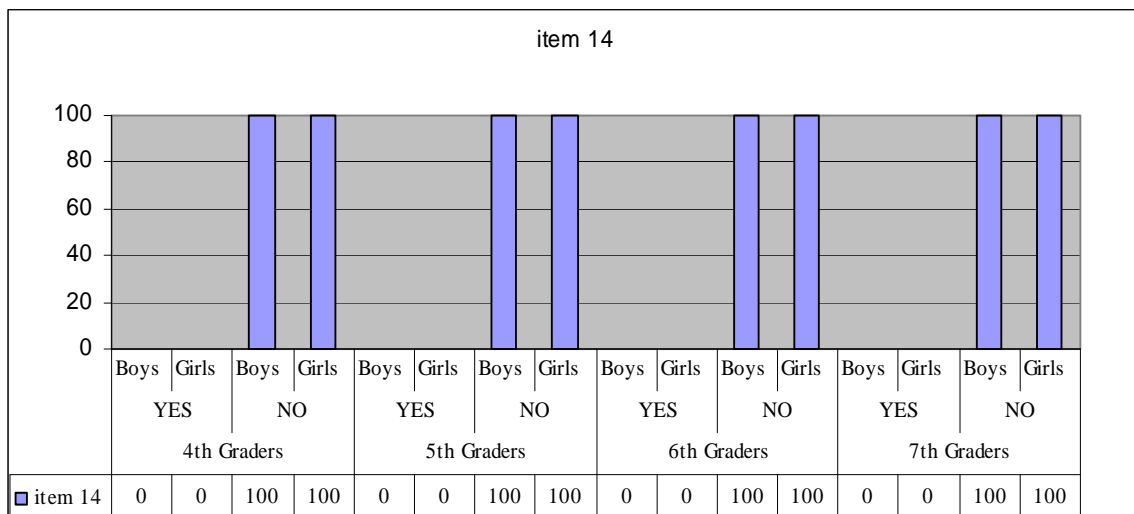
The values presented above seem to demonstrate that all the participants who are between the 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grades believe that preparing portfolio encourages them to learn English, which suggests that portfolio promotes a motivating language learning atmosphere for young learners. The 7<sup>th</sup> graders, who are familiar with portfolio but do not prepare it this year, also state that portfolio would be motivating for them.

**Item 14: a) A portfolio discourages me to learn English.**

**b) A portfolio would discourage me to learn English.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 14 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 13 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 14.**



**Table 13 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 14.**

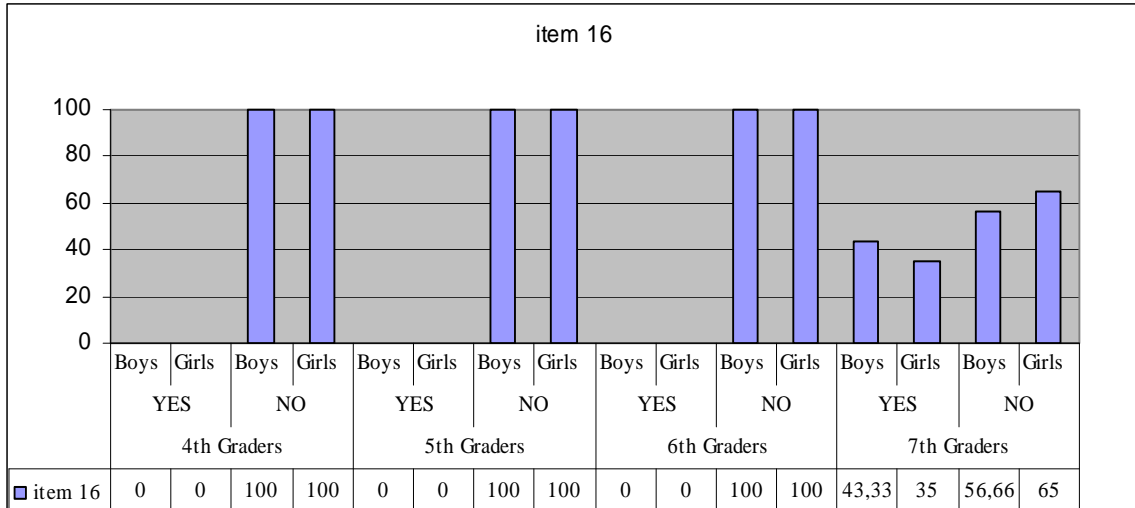
Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	0	0	15	100	0	0	14	100
5th graders	0	0	14	100	0	0	17	100
6th graders	0	0	17	100	0	0	23	100
7th graders	0	0	30	100	0	0	20	100

Looking at the findings obtained from item 14, we see that all the participants regardless of differences in terms of grade, age, and gender have positive attitudes toward portfolio. They all state that portfolio does not discourage them to learn English.

**Item 16: I think that preparing a portfolio next year is unnecessary.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 16 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 14 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 16.**



**Table 14 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 16.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	0	0	15	100	0	0	14	100
5th graders	0	0	14	100	0	0	17	100
6th graders	0	0	17	100	0	0	23	100
7th graders	13	43.33	17	56.66	7	35	13	65

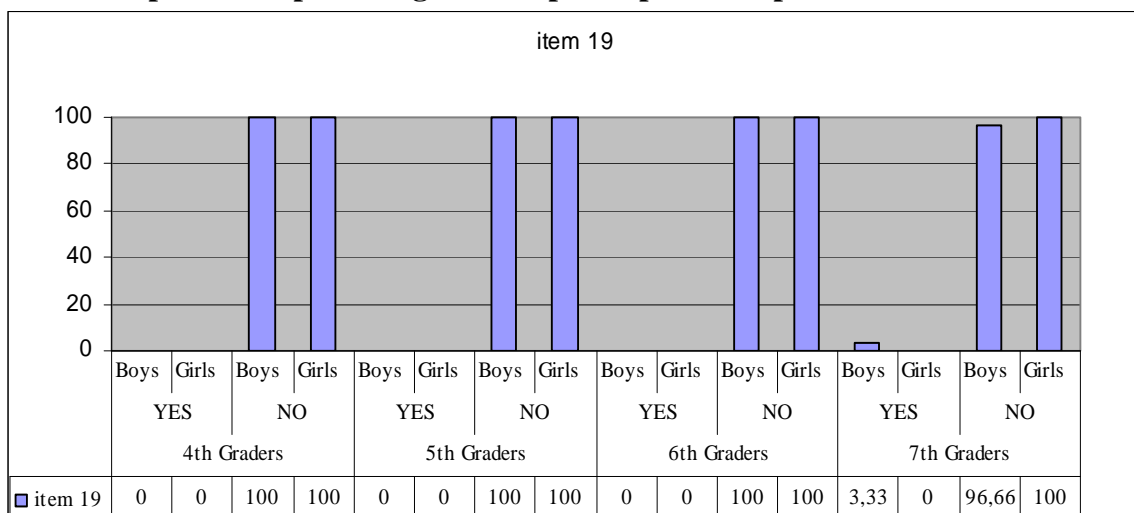
From the results above, it is clear that most of the learners who took part in the study indicate that they should go on preparing portfolio the next year. On the other hand, 43,33% of boys and 35% of girls in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade appear to agree with the statement thinking that it is unnecessary to use portfolio in learning English.

**Item 19: a) I think that my teacher will be subjective while assessing our portfolios.**

**b) I would think that my teacher will be subjective while assessing our portfolios.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 19 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 15 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 19.**



**Table 15 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 19.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	0	0	15	100	0	0	14	100
5th graders	0	0	14	100	0	0	17	100
6th graders	0	0	17	100	0	0	23	100
7th graders	1	3.33	29	96.66	0	0	20	100

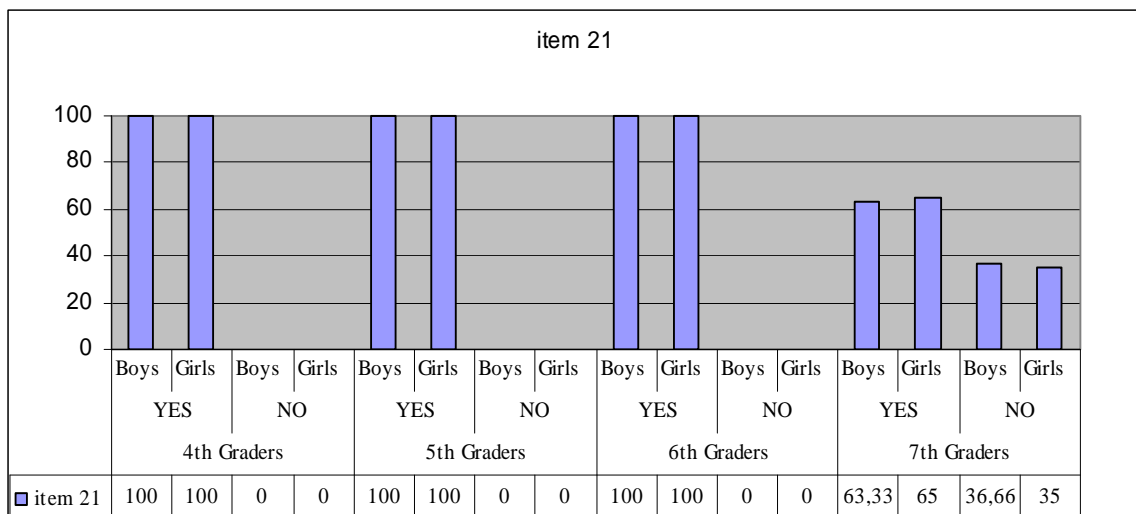
The percentages above tend to show that almost all of the participants believe that their teachers will not be subjective while assessing their portfolios. Only 3,33% of boys in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade think that the teacher will be subjective. It is obvious that young learners, who took part in the study, rely on their teachers' judgments on their learning.

**Item 21: a) I want to continue preparing a portfolio next year.**

**b) I would like to prepare a portfolio next year.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 21 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 16 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 21.**



**Table 16 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 21.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	15	100	0	0	14	100	0	0
5th graders	14	100	0	0	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	19	63.33	11	36.66	13	65	7	35

The values presented on graph 16 suggest that the majority of the learners agree with the statement that they want to go on preparing portfolio the following year, which means that they have positive attitudes toward portfolio study. However, the responses obtained from the 7<sup>th</sup> graders show that an average 35% of the learners do not want to prepare it.

#### 4.4. Item related to Self-Assessment

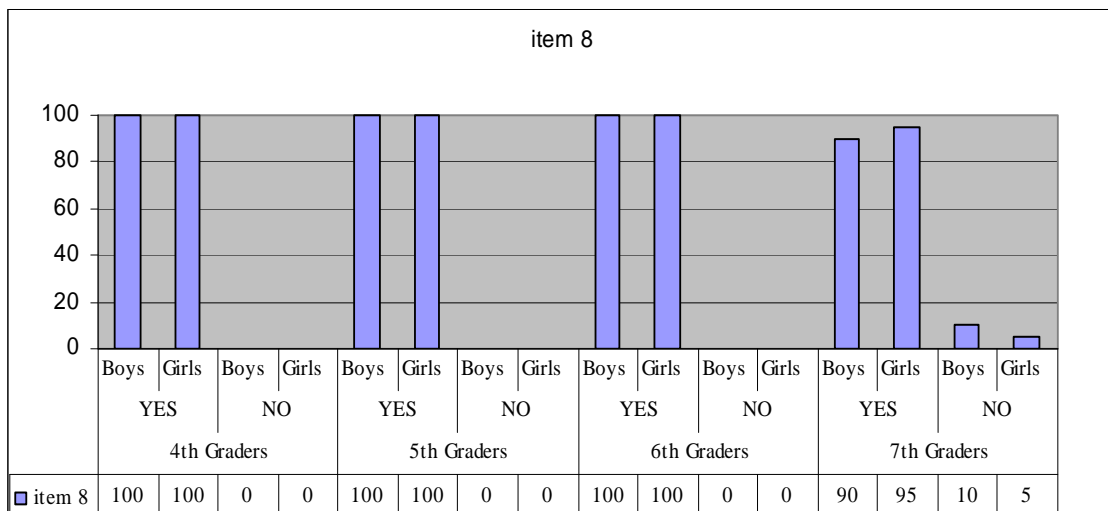
The following item which is the 8<sup>th</sup> item in learner questionnaire is aimed to obtain the participants' insights about self-assessment. The item investigates if the participants monitor their own progress in the target language assessing their own performances with the help of portfolio. The item includes an optional item for the 7<sup>th</sup> graders who are assessed in a summative way and do not prepare portfolio.

**Item 8: a) I think that I can monitor my own progress with the help of my portfolio.**

**b) I would monitor my own progress if I prepared portfolio.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 8 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 17 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 8.**





**Table 17 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 8.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	15	100	0	0	14	100	0	0
5th graders	14	100	0	0	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	27	90	3	10	19	95	1	5

As it is showed above, all the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders think that they can monitor their own progress with the help of their portfolios. 1% of boys and 5% of girls in 7<sup>th</sup> grade, on the other hand, do not think that they would monitor their own progress if they prepared it. It is clear from the results that most of the participants, regardless of their grades, believe that they can have the chance of monitoring their own language learning by preparing a portfolio.

#### **4.5. Item related to Peer-Assessment**

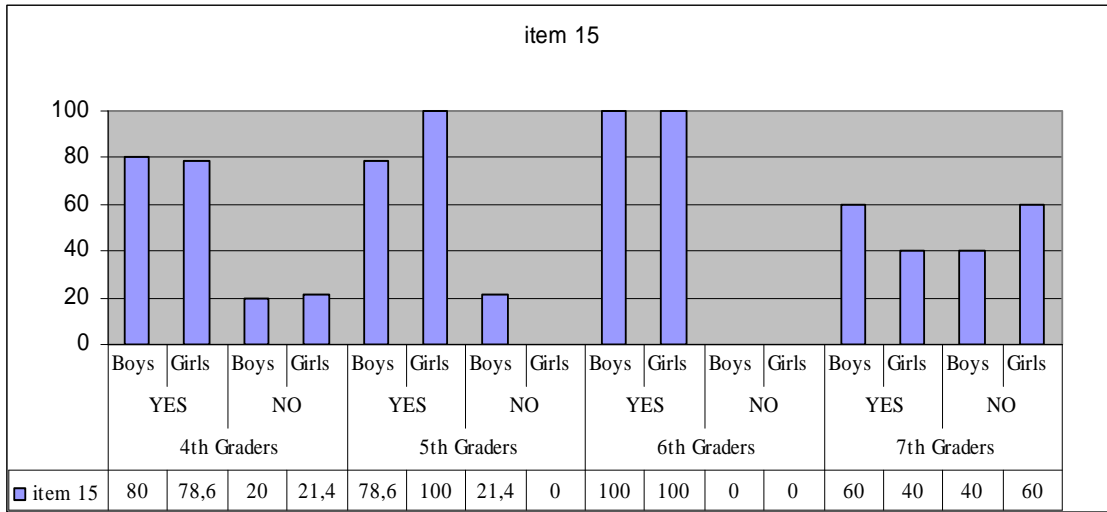
This section aims to obtain young language learners' perspectives on one of the most important components of portfolio, peer-assessment. Items 15, 17, 18, 20 in learner questionnaire investigate if the participants have positive attitudes toward their peers' comments on their works.

**Item 15: a) I make use of my friends' ideas by sharing my portfolio with them.**

**b) I would make use of my friends' ideas by sharing my portfolio with them.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 15 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 18 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 15.**



**Table 18 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 15.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	12	80	3	20	11	78.6	3	21.4
5th graders	11	78.6	3	21.4	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	23	100	0	0
7th graders	18	60	12	40	8	40	12	60

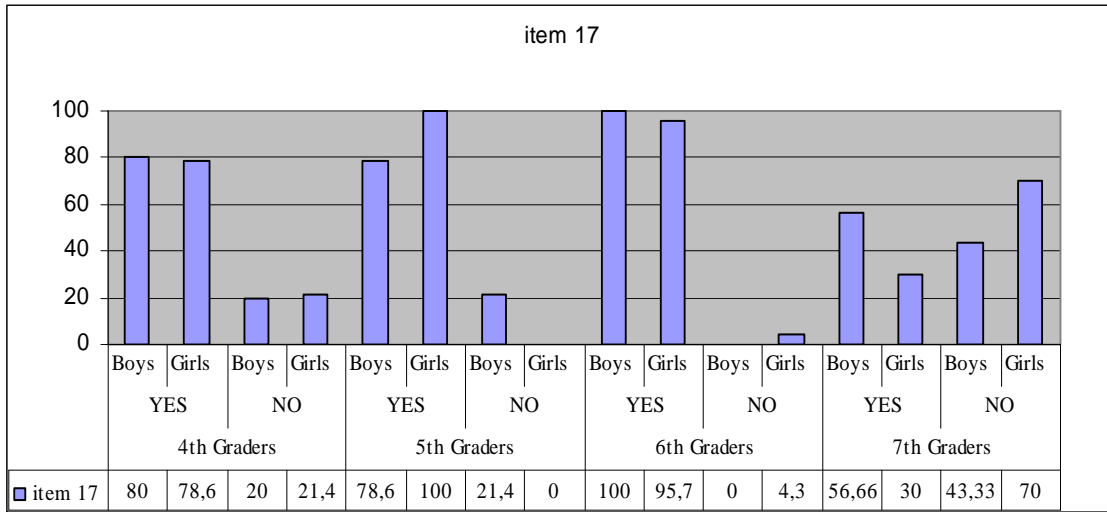
It is clear from the percentages presented above that more than half of the participants tend to make use of their friends' ideas by sharing their portfolios with them. It seems that they have a positive attitude to their peers' feedback on their work. However, 60% of the girls and 40% of the boys in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade disagree with the statement, which indicates that they have a negative attitude toward peer feedback.

**Item 17: a) I give new ideas to my friends by observing their portfolios.**

**b) I would give new ideas to my friends by observing their portfolios.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 17 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 19 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 17.**



**Table 19 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 17.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	12	80	3	20	11	78.6	3	21.4
5th graders	11	78.6	3	21.4	17	100	0	0
6th graders	17	100	0	0	22	95.7	1	4.3
7th graders	17	56.66	13	43.33	6	30	14	70

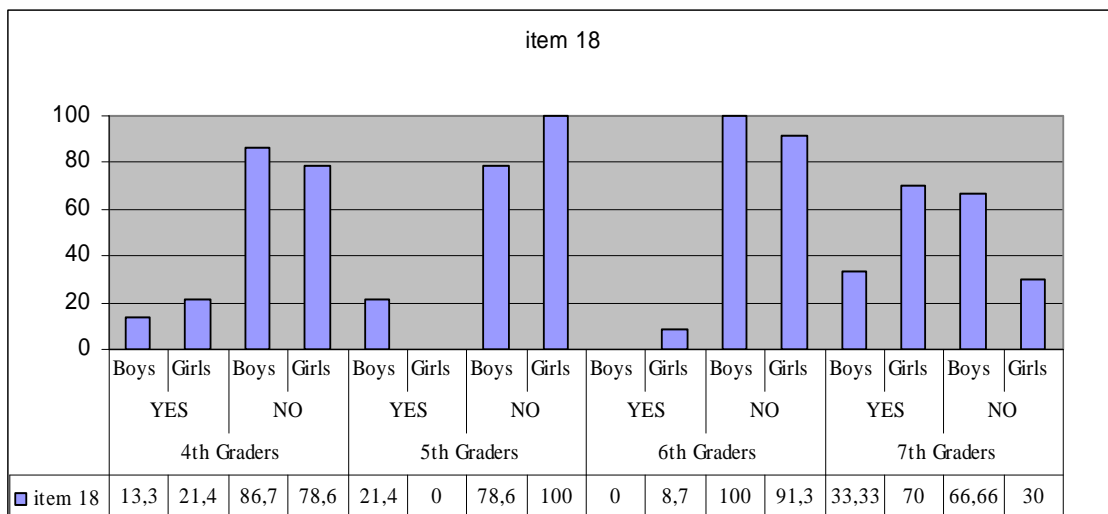
The values presented above demonstrate that more than half of the learners state that they give new ideas to their friends by examining their portfolios. In spite of the fact that most of the girls have positive attitudes toward giving feedback to their friends, 70% of the girls in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade indicate that they would be unwilling to share their ideas with their friends on their portfolios. In addition, it is obvious that the percentage of boys in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade who has negative ideas on giving feedback to their friends is higher than boys in the other grades.

**Item 18: a) I do not want to observe my friends' portfolios.**

**b) I would not like to observe my friends' portfolios.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 18 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 20 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 18.**



**Table 20 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 18.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	2	13.3	13	86.7	3	21.4	11	78.6
5th graders	3	21.4	11	78.6	0	100	17	0
6th graders	0	100	17	0	2	8.7	21	91.3
7th graders	10	33.33	20	66.66	14	70	6	30

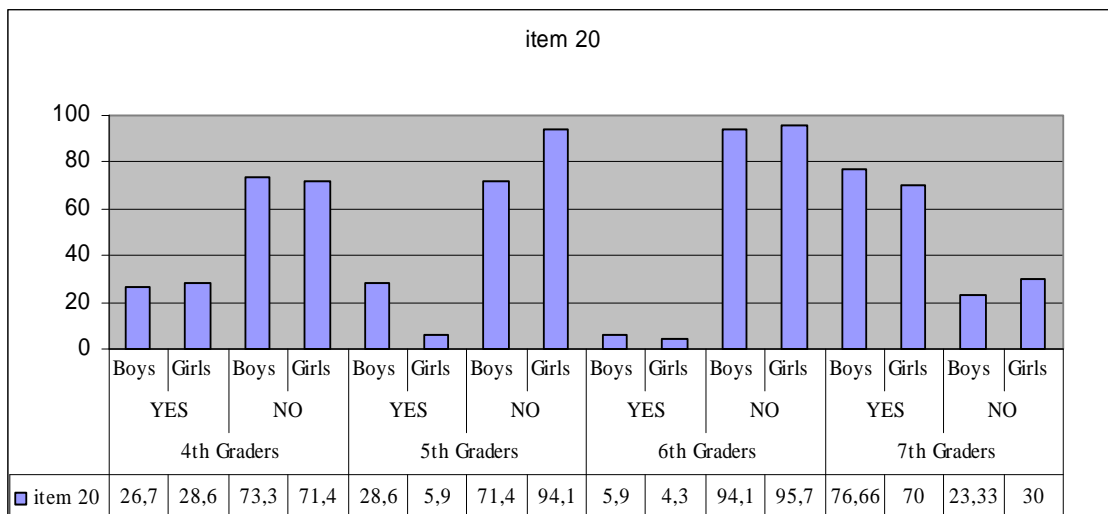
As presented on graph 20, 86,7% of boys and 78,6% of girls in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, 78,6 of boys and 100% of girls in the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, and 100% of boys and 91,3% of girls in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade are against the statement, which suggests that most of the participants want to observe their friends' work. While most of the girls, especially those who are in the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> grades, seem to be against the statement, most of the girls in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade indicate that they do not want to observe their friends' portfolios.

**Item 20: a) I do not want my friends to comment on my portfolio.**

**b) I would not like my friends to comment on my portfolio.**

The following graph presents the results obtained from young learners' responses to item 20 in the questionnaire.

**Graph 21 The percentages of the participants' responses to item 20.**



**Table 21 The frequencies of the participants' responses to item 20.**

Grade	boys				girls			
	Yes		No		Yes		No	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
4th graders	4	26.7	11	73.3	4	28.6	10	71.4
5th graders	4	28.6	10	71.4	1	5.9	16	94.1
6th graders	1	5.9	16	94.1	1	4.3	22	95.7
7th graders	23	76.66	7	23.33	14	70	6	30

When looking at the values obtained from item 20, we see that more than half of the young language learners indicate that they want their friends to comment on their portfolios so that they can have the opportunity to see their strengths and weaknesses. However, the majority of the 7<sup>th</sup> graders seem to think that they would refuse to receive comments on their portfolios if they prepared portfolio.

This chapter has presented the results obtained from the learner questionnaire composed of 21 items. It is observed that an overwhelming majority of the participants

are in favour of formative ways of assessment. However, some of the participants from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade do not prefer to be assessed through portfolio assessment, which is one of the tools of formative assessment, next year. The following chapter aims to discuss the findings presented on this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

The aim of the present study was to investigate the perspectives of young language learners towards assessment in terms of formative and summative ways. Since the subjects are young language learners of English as a foreign language, the study was carried out in a public primary school. As mentioned previously (see Chapter 3), the learner questionnaire and semi-structured interview were employed to elicit the subjects' views. In this chapter, the findings obtained by means of data collection instruments will be discussed. The interview data will be presented in the form of anecdotal notes when and where necessary.

The following research questions formulated to conduct the study will lead the chapter:

1. What are the perspectives of young language learners on assessment in terms of formative assessment?
2. What are the perspectives of young language learners on assessment in terms of summative assessment?
3. What are the perspectives of young language learners on test anxiety they experience due to written or oral exams?
4. What are the perspectives of young language learners on portfolio assessment which is used to assess their performance on language learning?
5. What are the perspectives of young language learners on self-assessment?
6. What are the perspectives of young language learners on peer-assessment?

### **5.1. What are the perspectives of young language learners on assessment in terms of formative assessment?**

Assessment in language teaching, as stated earlier (see section 2.3.), is carried out for different purposes in different ways. Language teachers in EFL settings assess their learners to see to what extent their teaching is effective in terms of methods and techniques applied in the process of teaching. Language learners, on the other hand, need to be assessed so that they know to what extent they have achieved instructional objectives. Teachers of English as a foreign language may want to keep their learners' records of language performance on a continuous basis, which provide efficient feedback on teaching and learning for teachers and learners in a formative way.

The findings obtained from items 3, 4, and 7 on the questionnaire (see Appendix A) which were aimed to investigate the perspectives of young language learners towards formative assessment is discussed in this section.

The basic aim of assessment of language learners is to provide language learners with sufficient feedback, so that they see their strengths and weaknesses in the target language, English. Harmer (2001) states that the teacher gives feedback because he/she wants to affect his/her students' language use in the future as well as commenting upon its use in the past. Item 3 in the learner questionnaire revealed that all the participants want their teachers to give them feedback after written examinations so that they can correct their mistakes. One of the participants interviewed says:

*“When I get feedback on my work, I have opportunity to see where I did well and where I need to dwell on more. My portfolio helps me get helpful hints, so that I correct my mistakes.”*

As the students interviewed states, feedback helps language learners advance on their goals they set in language learning. Portfolio, which is used as a formative assessment tool, provides enough feedback. While the participants indicate the importance of feedback in assessment, the results obtained from the item which investigates if the students think that they are successful in written exams suggests that



the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> graders believe that they do not do well in written exams as they wish. The interview with the participant from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade reveals one of the reasons for that negative feeling. The student says:

*“I do not believe in my capability for language learning. So, I always think that I will fail in written exams.”*

As it can be seen clearly from the 4th graders’ response (see section 4.2.1.), written exams may lower self-esteem, which leads language learners to think that they will be unsuccessful. Brown (1994) indicates that language learners cannot carry out cognitive or affective activity without some degree of self-esteem or belief in his/her own capabilities for that activity.

The last data obtained from item 7, which was aimed to elicit young language learners’ perspectives on formative assessment, suggests that an overwhelming majority of the participants want their teachers to assess them on a continuous basis taking into consideration their general performance for the whole term.

The findings above suggest that young language learners have positive attitudes towards formative assessment, which may result from several factors. The learners may wish to be assessed on an ongoing basis because they may think that they have enough chance to achieve in language learning since they receive feedback on their performance to correct their mistakes and they are assessed not only by means of written exams but also by authentic ways of assessment. Language learners, especially the 4<sup>th</sup> graders who are unfamiliar with the target language and formal written examinations, may feel secure while being assessed on an ongoing basis. In addition, they may think that compared to written exams which has limited time, continuous assessment tools give them enough time so that they do not feel pressurized. Finally, young language learners who are good at spoken tasks may do badly in written tasks like written exams, which may lead them to appreciate formative ways of assessment because formative tasks require the use of all the skills necessary for communication in the target language.

## **5.2. What are the perspectives of young language learners on assessment in terms of summative assessment?**

Summative assessment, as stated earlier (see section 2.3.), is concerned with the product of language teaching for teachers and learning it for students, which does not involve the process of learning and teaching while formative assessment does. Language teachers usually apply summative assessment tools to see to what extent their teaching and students' learning reach instructional objectives because they are more practical than formative assessment tools. Written exams are both easy and quick to assess. By means of written exams, the teacher has opportunity to get an immediate feedback on his/her teaching as the learners get feedback on their learning at the end of teaching and learning process. However, traditional paper and pencil exams are strongly criticized due to the disadvantages they have over ongoing assessment tools.

In this section, the perspectives of young language learners on summative way of assessment are discussed based on the findings obtained from the items 5, 6, and 13 on the questionnaire (see Appendix A).

Language teachers have different ways to assess their learners depending on their philosophy of teaching. Teachers who wish to assess his/her learners in a traditional way focusing on the outcomes of teaching and learning generally prefer written exams without taking into account the process of learning. However, almost all the participants disagree with the idea of being assessed only by means of traditional paper and pencil exams. The interview data also supports the findings obtained from the questionnaire item. The participant from the 5<sup>th</sup> grade says:

*“I do not want my teacher to assess me only by means of written exams, for I am usually unfamiliar with the questions on exam papers. In addition, I believe that I am good at speaking but not at writing. So, I usually make spelling mistakes while answering the questions, which affects my performance in a negative way.”*

The interview data suggests that language aptitude may affect the performance of test takers in a negative way if they are not good at written language. Cohen (1994) states that the variation across students that some may have better visual or auditory memory while some have better grammatical knowledge may have some effect on how individual students perform on particular types of language assessment, which indicates that language teachers should look for various ways so that all forms of language are taken into consideration instead of dwelling on only one aspect of the target language.

As stated earlier (see section 2.3.), traditional paper and pencil exams, which are the basic form of summative assessment, are carried out at the end of learning and teaching process, especially at the end of each unit. In the context where the study was done, the learners have an exam every month after completing a particular learning task. That is, they are assessed two or three times a term. However, a majority of the participants think that written exams they take a term are not enough for them to succeed in language learning. One of the participants says:

*“I may have a health problem. So, I may not be able to study hard for my exam on the next day. Because of that, I may fail or do badly. However hard I study for English for the whole term, I will be able considered a lazy student because I have got a bad mark.”*

Another student from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade adds:

*“The exams we have in English are not related to our daily life. For example, we will not fill in the blanks outside the classroom. Instead, we will communicate with people. Sometimes I find written exams in English really unnecessary.”*

The extracts above indicate that paper and pencil exams may lead language learners to failure in the target language when the content is away from their needs for learning a language. Besides, as the first extract states, physical and emotional problems described by Cohen (1994) as a one-time performance factors that learners have before or during examinations may affect their results negatively, which may discourage them

from learning a foreign language. Regardless of considering the process learners go through, our judgment about our students is bound to mislead us.

The result obtained from the last item reveals that an overwhelming majority of the participants do not believe that their teachers will be able to judge them in a negative or positive way by means of a single exam. This may stem from the teacher's approach of assessment leading him/her to apply various forms of assessment focusing on both process and product.

### **5.3. What are the perspectives of young language learners on test anxiety they experience due to written or oral exams?**

Exams in education are considered as a source of anxiety for learners. Particularly when they are based on the product of learning and teaching anxiety learners experience goes up. Since product based assessment, which is called summative assessment, is carried out at the end of a particular unit, students feel pressurized to pass it, which results in anxiety occurring while studying for the exam and reaching its peak during the exam. In spite of the fact that test anxiety is experienced widely, it is seen a problem when it affects performance in language learning. According to Brown (1994), it poses a problem for second language acquisition as it lowers learners' motivation for acquiring the target language.

The item reveals that almost all the young language learners are anxious before and during written exams. One of the participants from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade interviewed says:

*“My parents want me to get high grades so that I can go to a better high school two years later. For them, exam results are very important, for they believe that the results indicate if I will be able to pass OKS next year. Therefore, I feel anxious.”*

In the context where high grades are considered a sign of success by parents, students may think that they have to succeed in exams for their parents, which may cause anxiety. Besides, young learners enter student selection examination for high

schools (OKS) at the end of 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Due to this exam at the end of a primary education, students may feel that written exams are very important. Learners see that written exams do not offer a second chance for them to retake it. Therefore, exams like OKS are strongly criticized for their negative effects on young learners in Turkey. They are considered to block education because, as Bailey (1998) claims, exams direct curriculum. Students are led to think that some subjects at school are more significant because the exam is composed of them rather than involving all the subjects taught at school, which is bound to make subjects like English less important. Parents also force their children not to focus on such subjects so much.

The last item on test anxiety suggests that portfolio assessment, which is one of the forms for assessing learners' performance on an ongoing way, does not result in anxiety for the participants. Since the teacher and students collaborate in the assessment process, portfolio may lower test anxiety. Language learners may feel more secure with the help of a collaborative atmosphere, compare to a more threatening process of assessment. The teacher facilitating language learners while assessing them develops learners' self-confidence, so that they do experience lower anxiety.

#### **5.4. What are the perspectives of young language learners on portfolio assessment which is used to assess their performance on language learning?**

As mentioned earlier (see Chapter 4), the present study was carried out to investigate the perspectives of young language learners on assessment through formative and summative ways. To let them have some insights into formative assessment ways in language learning, they were asked to prepare a portfolio which would enable them to be assessed on a continuous basis. Having being assessed in a summative way through traditional pencil and paper exams so far, the participants had the chance of being monitored by means of a different type of assessment for the first time. However, they were being assessed in a summative way so that they could differentiate between the two ways of assessment.

The questionnaire items concerning portfolio assessment reveals that an overwhelming majority of the participants have positive attitudes toward portfolio

assessment. They state that portfolio motivates them to go on learning outside the school. However, some of the participants from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade show their unwillingness to be assessed through portfolio assessment for the next year. One of the 7<sup>th</sup> graders interviewed says:

*“We will have a very important exam at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade in order to apply to a better high school. Because of that, we will attend special course centers to prepare for the test. We will not have enough time to prepare a portfolio due to our limited time for OKS. In addition, English is not the subject we have to study so hard because we do not have any questions in English.”*

The extract above indicates that the 7<sup>th</sup> graders feel reluctant to prepare a portfolio owing to the exam they will take at the end of the second semester, OKS. Exam-oriented education in Turkey is considered to block effective teaching of the curriculum, which is bound to hamper the target language. Due to the fact that English is not the subject to be tested in OKS, students, particularly those at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade, see subjects like English unnecessary. As Bailey (1998) points out, assessment drives curriculum, or, more specifically, assessment drives students' perceptions of what is important in the curriculum. Therefore, young language learners focus on the subjects such as Turkish, Maths, Science, etc. because of the content of the exam applied at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Besides, special course centers established to prepare learners for the exams may increase their work load so much that they may find it hard to handle extra works at school. We observe that the 8<sup>th</sup> graders spend most of their time at such centers at weekdays and weekends. Therefore, the 7<sup>th</sup> graders foreseeing these days may find portfolio a time consuming task for the next year.

While assessing language learners on a continuous basis through their portfolios, we as language teachers encounter a problem of subjectivity in grading. However, almost all the participants agree with the statement that their teachers will be objective in assessing their portfolios. The reason for the learners to trust in their teachers may be that they were clearly informed of the criteria for assessing their performance through portfolio assessment beforehand, so that no ambiguity could exist. Moreover,

collaboration between the teacher and language learners to fulfil their goals they have already set may create a reliable atmosphere.

### **5.5. What are the perspectives of young language learners on self-assessment?**

Paradigmatic shift toward a more learner-centered perspective in education affects how we see the process of assessment. As language learners become more actively involved in language learning, they take some responsibility for assessing their own performance. Bailey (1998) indicates that self-assessment fosters autonomous learning, so that learners can monitor their strengths and weaknesses and determine where they need extra work.

Examining the results obtained from the learner questionnaire, we see that virtually all the participants monitor their own progress in language learning with the help of portfolio. In addition, the participants from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade who are assessed in a summative way state that they would monitor their progress in the target language by preparing portfolios. As mentioned earlier, the 7<sup>th</sup> graders were assessed on an ongoing basis through portfolio assessment last year. One of the participants from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade interviewed says:

*“Last year we used to write paragraphs about our opinions on learning English or fill in some forms to assess our own performance. Such activities helped us notice where to study more. Because we always had our portfolios with us, we could see our strengths and weaknesses. But we do not have chance to assess ourselves after having written exams because we are not allowed to examine our exam papers most of the time.*

As the extract above suggests, self assessment enables language learners to gain insight into their strengths and weaknesses. It also reveals that portfolio assessment helps learners become more autonomous by providing them with opportunities to take responsibility for making decisions concerning what is good, what needs to be improved, etc. (Smolen *et.al.*, 1995). However, it is clear from the extract that

traditional paper and pencil exams do not let learners assess their own progress via self assessment tasks. The learners have no chance to monitor their strengths and weaknesses by examining their papers. Even if they have such an opportunity, they do not exactly gain insight into the areas they should focus on since exams are composed of a limited number of questions concerning the curriculum. That is, language teachers cannot incorporate every topic covered on the curriculum into exam papers.

### **5.6. What are the perspectives of young language learners on peer-assessment?**

Peer-assessment is an integrated part of formative assessment, which facilitates learner-centered perspective in education. As learners become more autonomous in their own learning processes, they get more control on assessing themselves and their peers. Through portfolios, language learner cooperates with his/her peer, so that he/she makes necessary adjustments on his/her work. In addition to communicating with their teachers on their learning in a supporting atmosphere where the teacher has the role of a facilitator rather than a judge, learners collaborate with their peers on the target language, which strengthens the communication between learners (Brown 1998, Puhl 1997).

When the results obtained from the questionnaire items are examined, it is seen that a majority of the participants agree that their peers' comments on their works are beneficial for them. They seem to consider peer assessment as a source for new perspectives or strategies that may help them achieve in learning a foreign language since they exchange them with their peers. Gaining new insights into his/her peers' learning strategies, a language learner may find it useful to apply them to his/her learning, which creates collaborative rather than a competitive atmosphere. However, some of the participants from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade appear to have negative attitudes toward the involvement of their peers in assessing their performance on the target language, indicating that they would not share their portfolios with their peers. One of the interviewees from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade says:



*“I wouldn’t want to share my portfolio with my friends because they would make fun of my works. In addition, I would feel ashamed when I see others’ works if they were better than mine. So, my friends’ negative comments on my portfolio would decrease my motivation to learn English.”*

As it is stated in the extract above, the learners think that when they share their portfolios with their peers, they will feel humiliated, which is bound to affect their motivation for learning the target language. According to Cook (1991) learners may find it difficult to learn a second language in the classroom if they have no motivation. Besides, introversion of a learner may lead to negative attitudes toward peer assessment, for introverted learners feel embarrassed while expressing their opinions. However, as Ellis and Brewster (2002) suggests, we as language teachers can select the pairs of learners who work together in a cooperative way, so that we can construct a friendly atmosphere where the learners support each other.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter is first aimed to draw a conclusion to the present study summarizing the results obtained through learner questionnaire and interview based on the research questions. Then, the limitations faced when conducting the study are explained. Having explained the limitations of the study, the researcher provides pedagogical implications of the study. Finally, the chapter ends with suggestions for future researches on the assessment of foreign language performance of learners.

#### **6.1. Summary and Conclusion**

The present study was carried out in a state primary school with 150 young learners of English as a foreign language based on the research questions concerning the assessment of young language learners' performance.

What the perspectives of young language learners towards assessment in terms of formative and summative assessment was our primary question to be investigated. It was revealed from learner questionnaire that an overwhelming majority of the participants were in favour of being assessed on a continuous basis. Through formative assessment language learners had an opportunity to see their strengths and weaknesses, which would help them to take necessary steps to improve their performance in the target language. On the other hand, the findings concerning summative assessment suggested that summative assessment was seen as an inappropriate way to assess the whole performance of language learners since it focused on written form of language. Furthermore, most of the participants indicated that they experienced test anxiety during traditional paper-and-pencil exams, which resulted in negative attitudes towards summative assessment.

Teachers make use of alternative ways of assessment to assess their learners on an ongoing way. Portfolios are preferred as a formative tool by language teachers. In the

present study, the participants were assessed through learner portfolios. The findings concerning portfolio assessment indicated that the participants had positive attitudes towards portfolio assessment. Through portfolios, learners could monitor their progress in the target language over time. Besides, they indicated that portfolio assessment lowered their anxiety as they were assessed on an ongoing way compared to traditional paper-and-pencil exams. However, some of the participants from the 7<sup>th</sup> grade were against being assessed through learner portfolios due to the exam at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. They thought that it would be a waste of time to prepare a portfolio, for they had to study for OKS at the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Moreover, since the 7<sup>th</sup> graders are on the eve of adolescence, they may have been critical of innovative assessment tools they are not accustomed to.

Learner portfolios enable language learners to assess themselves and their peers. Self and peer assessment were regarded as authentic ways of assessment by the vast majority of the participants. They pointed out that through self and peer assessment they gained new insights into the process of their own language learning, which enabled them to monitor their strengths and weaknesses. However, a minority of the participants expressed their negative opinions on peer assessment. They stated that negative comments of their peers would discourage them from learning the language. The interview data showed that learners would feel humiliated when their peers criticize their work.

## **6.2. Limitations**

The present study was carried out to investigate the perspectives of young language learners towards assessment through formative or summative way. However, during the implementation of the study the researcher faced some obstacles.

An overwhelming majority of the participants had never experienced long term English courses with a single teacher. Some of them had been taught by teachers who had no experience in foreign language teaching. Owing to the earthquakes in 1999 in the province of Duzce, the shortage of experienced teachers and damaged schools for

about 4 years had resulted in poor performance in learners, particularly at the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> grades.

### **6.3. Pedagogical Implications**

The present study highlights several points language teachers should take into consideration before assessing young learners of English. The study reveals that young language learners are in favour of formative ways of assessment since they are assessed on a continuous basis without being labeled as successful or lazy learners after traditional paper-and-pencil exams.

Moreover, it is clear from the findings based on the learner questionnaire and interview that language learners at the 7<sup>th</sup> grade may have negative attitudes toward portfolio assessment due to the exam they take at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Since the exam at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> grade ignores English which is taught for 5 years in primary schools, learners may have a misconception that English is not so significant for their future lives. OKS may, therefore, hamper foreign language teaching in Turkey. OKS should be questioned for its advantages and disadvantages over young learners in Turkey. In addition, the fact that the 7<sup>th</sup> graders are on the eve of adolescence may result in these negative perspectives towards innovative assessment tools.

### **6.4. Insights into Future Research**

In the present study, the perspectives of young language learners towards assessment in terms of formative and summative ways were explored. Young language learners who took part in the study were asked to prepare portfolios so that they could be assessed on an ongoing basis, which helped them differentiate between formative and summative assessment tools. Another study can be carried out to investigate the perspectives of language teachers on language assessment in terms of formative and summative assessment. Since language teachers are those who are responsible for the selection of assessment way in language classrooms, their perspectives would provide significant implications for foreign language teaching. In addition, a comparative study

can be carried out to investigate the perspectives of young and adult foreign language learners on formative and summative assessment.

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## APPENDIX A

### LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE (TURKISH)



**Sevgili Öğrenciler,**

Bu anket sizlerin İngilizce dersinde yapılan değerlendirme ile ilgili genel düşünceleriniz ve hazırladığınız portfolyo dosyasına olan bakışınız hakkında bilgi almak amacı ile hazırlanmıştır. Başka bir amaçla kullanılmayacaktır. Ankete isminizi yazmayabilirsiniz. Ankete vereceğiniz samimi yanıtlar sağlıklı ve doğru sonuçlar almamız için önemlidir.

Katkılarınız için teşekkür ederim.

**İ. Çağlar DOĞANDERE**  
İngilizce Öğrt.

	Evet	Hayır
1) Yazılı sınav öncesinde ve yazılı sınav esnasında endişeleniyorum.	☺	☹
2) a) Portfolyo dosyası hazırlarken sınav kaygısı yaşamıyorum. b) <b>Portfolyo dosyası hazırlasaydım sınav kaygısı yaşamazdım.</b>	☺	☹
3) Sınav sonucunda öğretmenimin hatalarımı düzeltmem için beni yönlendirmesini istiyorum.	☺	☹
4) Yazılı sınavlarda başarı durumumu tam olarak gösterebildiğimi düşünmüyorum.	☺	☹
5) Öğretmenimin beni sadece yazılı sınavlarla değerlendirmesini istiyorum.	☺	☹
6) Dönem içinde yapılan sınavların başarıyı göstermemde yeterli olduğunu düşünüyorum.	☺	☹



7) İngilizce dersinde bir dönem boyunca gösterdiğim başarının değerlendirilmesini istiyorum.	☺	☹
8) a) Portfolyo dosyası ile kendi ilerlememi gözlemleyebileceğimi düşünüyorum. b) <b>Portfolyo dosyası hazırlasaydım kendi ilerlememi gözlemleyebilirdim.</b>	☺	☹
9) a) Portfolyo dosyamı değerlendirirken öğretmenimin tarafsız olacağına inanıyorum. b) <b>Portfolyo dosyamı değerlendirirken öğretmenimin tarafsız olacağını düşünürdüm.</b>	☺	☹
10) Portfolyo dosyasının bize bir yararı olduğunu düşünmüyorum.	☺	☹
11) a) Portfolyo dosyası hazırlayarak okul dışında da öğrenmeye devam ediyorum. b) <b>Portfolyo dosyası hazırlasaydım okul dışında da öğrenmeye devam ederdim.</b>	☺	☹

	Evet	Hayır
12) a)Portfolyo dosyaları beni öğrenmeye teşvik ediyor.	😊	😞
<b>b)Portfolyo dosyası beni öğrenmeye teşvik ederdi.</b>	😊	😞
13) Öğretmenimin bir sınavla hakkımda bir yargıya varacağına inanıyorum.	😊	😞
14) a)Portfolyo dosyası hazırlamak İngilizce öğrenme isteğimi kırıyor.	😊	😞
<b>b)Portfolyo dosyası hazırlamak İngilizce öğrenme isteğimi kırardı.</b>	😊	😞
15) a)Portfolyo dosyamı arkadaşlarımla paylaşarak onların fikirlerinden yararlanıyorum.	😊	😞
<b>b)Portfolyo dosyamı arkadaşlarımla paylaşarak onların fikirlerinden yararlanırdım.</b>	😊	😞
16) Gelecek yıl portfolyo dosyası hazırlamanın gereksiz olduğunu düşünüyorum.	😊	😞



17) a)Arkadaşlarımla portfolyo dosyalarına bakarak onlara yeni fikirler veriyorum.	😊	😞
<b>b)Arkadaşlarımla portfolyo dosyalarına bakarak onlara yeni fikirler verirdim.</b>	😊	😞
18) a)Arkadaşlarımla portfolyo dosyasına bakmak istemiyorum.	😊	😞
<b>b)Arkadaşlarımla portfolyo dosyasına bakmak istemezdim.</b>	😊	😞
19) a)Öğretmenimin portfolyo dosyalarımızı değerlendirirken tarafsız davranacağını düşünüyorum.	😊	😞
<b>b)Öğretmenimin portfolyo dosyamızı değerlendirirken tarafsız davranacağını düşünürdüm.</b>	😊	😞
20) a)Arkadaşlarımla portfolyo dosyam hakkında yorum yapmasını istemiyorum.	😊	😞
<b>b)Arkadaşlarımla portfolyo dosyam hakkında yorum yapmasını istemezdim.</b>	😊	😞
21) a)Portfolyo dosyası hazırlamayı gelecek yıl da sürdürmek istiyorum.	😊	😞
<b>b)Gelecek yıl portfolyo dosyası hazırlamak isterdim.</b>	😊	😞

Portfolyo dosyası hazırlamak konusunda yukarıdakiler dışında paylaşmak istediğiniz fikriniz varsa buraya yazabilirsiniz.

## APPENDIX B

### LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE (ENGLISH)

	Yes	No
1) I feel anxious before and during examinations.	☺	☹
2) a) I do not feel anxious while preparing portfolio.	☺	☹
<b>b) I would not feel anxious if I prepared portfolio.</b>	☺	☹
3) I want my teacher to give me feedback after an exam so that I can correct my mistakes.	☺	☹
4) I do not think that I show my actual success on written exams.	☺	☹
5) I want my teacher to assess me only by means of written exams.	☺	☹
6) I think that written exams carried out during the term are enough for me to show my success.	☺	☹



7) I want my success to be assessed for the entire term.	☺	☹
8) a) I think that I can monitor my own progress with the help of my portfolio.	☺	☹
<b>b) I would monitor my own progress if I prepared portfolio.</b>	☺	☹
9) a) I think that my teacher will be objective while assessing my portfolio.	☺	☹
<b>b) I would think that my teacher will be objective while assessing my portfolio.</b>	☺	☹
10) I do not think that a portfolio is useful for us.	☺	☹
11) I go on learning with my portfolio outside school hours.	☺	☹

	Yes	No
12) a) A portfolio encourages me to learn.		
<b>b) A portfolio would encourage me to learn.</b>		
13) I think that my teacher will be able to make accurate judgment about me with a single exam.		
14) a) A portfolio discourages me to learn English.		
<b>b) A portfolio would discourage me to learn English.</b>		
15) a) I make use of my friends' ideas by sharing my portfolio with them.		
<b>b) I would make use of my friends' ideas by sharing my portfolio with them.</b>		
16) I think that preparing a portfolio next year is unnecessary.		



17) a) I give new ideas to my friends by observing their portfolios.		
<b>b) I would give new ideas to my friends by observing their portfolios.</b>		
18) a) I do not want to observe my friends' portfolios.		
<b>b) I would not like to observe my friends' portfolios.</b>		
19) a) I think that my teacher will be subjective while assessing our portfolios.		
<b>b) I would think that my teacher will be subjective while assessing our portfolios.</b>		
20) a) I do not want my friends to comment on my portfolio.		
<b>b) I would not like my friends to comment on my portfolio.</b>		
21) a) I want to continue preparing a portfolio next year.		
<b>b) I would like to prepare a portfolio next year.</b>		

If you have an idea that you want to share about preparing a portfolio, you can write here.

## STUDENT QUESTIONNAIRE IN ORDER

### Items related to assessment

#### A: Formative assessment

1. Sınav sonucunda öğretmenimin hatlarımı düzeltmem için beni yönlendirmesini istiyorum.
2. Yazılı sınavlarda başarı durumumu tam olarak gösterebildiğimi düşünmüyorum.
3. İngilizce dersinde bir dönem boyunca gösterdiğim başarımın değerlendirilmesini istiyorum.

#### B: Summative assessment

1. Öğretmenimin beni sadece yazılı sınavlarla değerlendirmesini istiyorum.
2. Dönem içinde yapılan sınavların başarımı göstermemde yeterli olduğunu düşünüyorum.
3. Öğretmenimin bir sınavla hakkımda bir yargıya varacağına inanıyorum.

### Items related to test anxiety

1. Yazılı sınav öncesinde ve yazılı sınav esnasında endişeleniyorum.
2. Portfolyo dosyası hazırlarken sınav kaygısı yaşamıyorum.

### Items related to portfolio assessment

1. Portfolyo dosyamı değerlendirirken öğretmenimin tarafsız olacağına inanıyorum.
2. Portfolyo dosyasının bize bir yararı olduğunu düşünmüyorum.
3. Portfolyo dosyası hazırlayarak okul dışında da öğrenmeye devam ediyorum.
4. Portfolyo dosyası beni öğrenmeye teşvik ediyor.
5. Portfolyo dosyası hazırlamak İngilizce öğrenme isteğimi kısıyor.
6. Gelecek yıl portfolyo dosyası hazırlamanın gereksiz olduğunu düşünüyorum.
7. Öğretmenimin portfolyo dosyalarımızı değerlendirirken taraflı davranacağını düşünüyorum.
8. Portfolyo dosyası hazırlamayı gelecek yıl da sürdürmek istiyorum.

**Items related to self-assessment**

1. Portfolyo dosyası ile kendi ilerlememi gözlemleyebileceğimi düşünüyorum.

**Items related to peer-assessment**

1. Portfolyo dosyamı arkadaşlarımla paylaşarak onların fikirlerinden yararlanıyorum.
2. Arkadaşlarımın portfolyo dosyalarına bakarak onlara yeni fikirler veriyorum.
3. Arkadaşlarımın portfolyo dosyasına bakmak istemiyorum.
4. Arkadaşlarımın portfolyo dosyam hakkında yorum yapmasını istemiyorum.

## **Özgeçmişim**

1981 yılında Rize’de doğdum. İlköğrenimimi Düzce’de tamamladım. 1999 yılında Düzce Yabancı Dil Ağırlıklı Lisesi’nden, 2003 yılında da Uludağ Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi İngiliz Dili Eğitimi’nden mezun oldum.

Eylül 2003’te Düzce ili Bilgi İlköğretim Okulu’na İngilizce Öğretmeni olarak atandım. Aynı yıl Uludağ Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü İngiliz Dili Eğitimi’nde yüksek lisans öğrenimine başladım.

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İlyas Çağlar DOĞANDERE