Students Perceptions of Homework as a Formal Assessment Method[*]

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Abstract

Whether it is formative or summative, an assessment which is explained in Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2015) as "an opinion or judgement about sb/sth that has been thought about" (p.75) plays a significant role in completing the language education process because of its ability to provide feedback. Choosing the right assessment method is crucial for language teachers since most classical assignments create anxiety and make the process problematic for the students. Whether the classical assignments evaluate the students' knowledge, or they understand that their grammar level for a definite time is another discrepancy to clarify. By taking into consideration those, this qualitative study focuses on the problems of classical exams and tries to reveal how beneficial and desirable can a difficult homework be as a formal assessment method. An unstructured interview form was used to collect data from 40 prep-class students who were selected using a convenience sampling method to understand their perceptions about homework as a formal assessment method. Results showed that although 32 of those students had difficulties while preparing the homework, most of them liked the process as well and think that this kind of homework is more beneficial than classical exams. Moreover, more than half of the participants' desire to have such homework instead of classical exams despite homework's difficulties, and they also express that this homework increased their language knowledge.

Keywords: ELT, assessment, homework, learning

1. INTRODUCTION

"Education involves not only knowing but also being able to use or do what one knows" (Riordan & Loacker, 2009, p.178). Education is not only about input or what an individual has in its mind, it is about how this knowledge can be beneficial in human life. However, the first step of education is to acquire the required knowledge, and assessment is the sole process used to understand this acquisition level.

According to Sambell et al. (2017), assessment is a complex and multifaced process related to the academic standards and aims to understand the quality and level of the achievement (McPhee et al., 2018). Assessment is a complex and multifaced process because it is not only related to understanding the amount of information gathered by the learner but also an evaluation of the learning process and program. In addition to reflecting the development of an individual learner, the assessment reveals the success of a teaching program. On this behalf, it is difficult to define it as in the example-"a wide range of methods for evaluating pupil performance and attainment including formal testing and examinations, practical and oral assessment, a classroom-based assessment carried out by teachers and portfolios" (Gipps, 2003, p.VII). Instead of such a definition, trying to explain this concept with its importance, purposes and types would be better. Nevertheless, the description above makes it apparent that assessment includes different methods which can be in a practical, written or oral style.

As a finishing and starting point of the language education circle, assessment occupies an important place in the process. Language education is not complete without assessment, and a new cycle starts with the evaluation of the assessment results. Because of this reason, assessment should take an essential place while planning a language learning curriculum. This importance of the

assessment is expressed in four items by Joughin (2009a) starting with the ability of the assessment to provide learning. The researcher assumes that by planning the assessment as a learning task, students will feel that they would also learn lots of the things at the end of the process. This idea is supported by Preston et al. (2020) who believe that assessment is a strategic tool to develop teaching and learning.

The second item mentioned by Joughin (2009a) as an ability of assessment is to give feedback. Giving feedback helps learners to identify gaps they have and gives them chances to complete these gaps. Faniran and Ajayi (2019) justify this thought by expressing that assessment is a critical step in education which evaluates students' success. Level of this success can be used to give feedback or evaluate the process in order to start a new learning circle. According to researchers, assessment and providing feedback are also source of motivation for the students. An assessment helps students evaluate the quality of their work (Joughin, 2009a). With the help of assessment, students can have thoughts about what they can do or how much they can use their knowledge. Assessment is a useful tool to evaluate the quality of learning. Heinrich (2017) believes that after defining the desired outcomes and intention, an assessment will be helpful to understand the quality of the learning. According to Piroozmanesh and Imanipour (2018), assessment not only helps to find the quality of the education, but it also defines the quality; as a successful assessment increases the quality of the process.

The last item mentioned by Joughin (2009a) is about informing teaching. Norton (2007) assumes that assessment is one of the six specified areas of learning activities to increase learning. Assessment can improve learning in different ways such as informing teacher, showing students their depths, helping students get new knowledge or abilities from the assessment tasks, and increasing the quality of the learning process and curriculum. Concerning Aouine et al. (2019)'s ideas which express "the learning assessment must be an integral part of teaching approaches and also learning process" (p.124), assessment is a substantial element for the education process.

Odendahl (2011) who studied on the history of assessment found out that assessment methods were first used as employment tests and these tests affected the developments in educational testing. Then, universities in Paris and Bologna started to use oral examinations in the late 12th century, and the tradition of oral examination continued till Enlightenment despite the introduction of the written tests after paper became more available in the 1500s. Use of individual oral examination started to decrease in the USA especially after 1845 with the help of Horace Mann's struggles (Odendahl, 2011). Then, as Black (2002) mentioned, testing and assessment were developed a lot and started to be used to create new trends and methods in education by getting help from the social changes.

This significant element which started to be used as an individual oral assessment especially for employment then spread to the education has various purposes. Sambell et al. (2017) and Angelo and Patricia (1993) think that assessment's purpose is giving feedback about the learning process, but this is not the only aim of it. An assessment has various purposes which are classified in different ways. For instance; Morrison (2003) classifies the purposes of the assessment as educational improvement, increased school effectiveness and curriculum reform. This classification is supported by Halpern (2004) who thinks the purposes of the assessment are improving teaching and learning and guiding the decisions when designing an assessment program, and Joughin (2009b) who believes the purposes are supporting the process of learning, evaluating students' achievements and continuing the standards of the discipline. Pellegrino's et al. (2001) assessment classification is in the same direction and named as assisting learning for which teachers use different methods to understand the students' levels and plan the next step, evaluating individual achievement which is carried out to learn whether the student is on the desired level or not and evaluating the programs which is related with policymakers who want to evaluate and redesign the learning program if needed. Misley and Knowles (2002) and Heinrich (2017) support Pellegrino and Heinrich also makes an addition by expressing the

role of assessment in motivating students via feedback. As understood from the related studies, assessment has three primary purposes, and these purposes are tried to be realised with the help of particular types of assessments.

Assessment's purposes are related to its types. Black (2002) connects formative assessment to aiding learning and summative assessment with purposes of review, transfer, certification and accountability to the public. As understood from Black, formative and summative assessment that helps teachers understand the level of students' learning and increase learning (Curry & Smith, 2017) are the main distinctions of the assessment types. Osborne and Wagor (2004) think that summative assessment is the assessment of learning contrary to the formative assessment which is assessment for learning. Distinctions of summative and formative assessment are not only about their final process and purpose.

Summative assessment which is defined by Mislevy and Knowles (2002) as an assessment that evaluates student progress is generally about measuring the students' learning. According to Sambell et al. (2017), educators sum up the learning and make evaluations in summative assessment. This method is the final process of education and reviews the students' progress with numbers or grades. Its main aim is understanding students' levels and finding out whether educational outcomes are satisfactory or not. On this basis, summative assessment can also be used to check the effectiveness of a learning program and curriculum. Strijbos (2011), who also adds that summative assessment is individualistic and mostly about the cognitive side of learning, supports Sambell's et al. ideas. System of the summative assessment can be seen from a teacher's perspective in Figure 1.
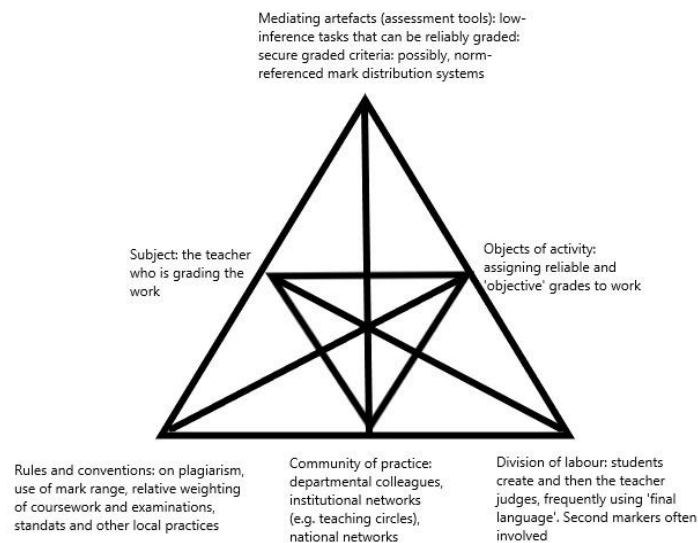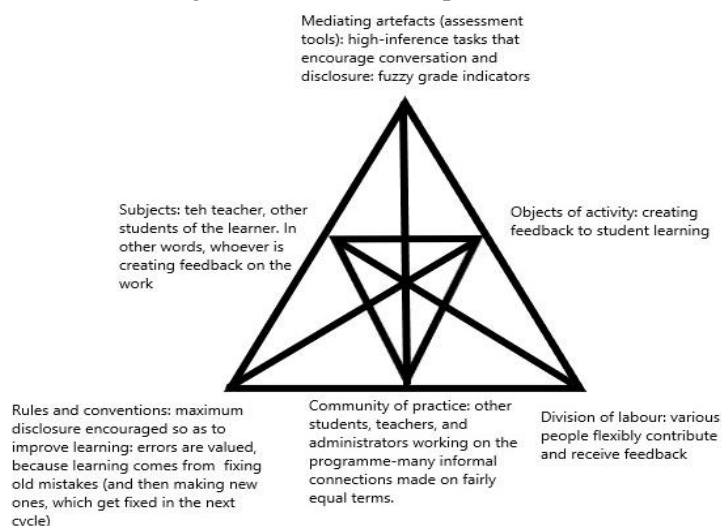
(Knight & Yorke, 2003,p. 17)

Figure 1. Activity system of summative assessment from a teacher's perspective

It is understood from the figure that summative assessment is mostly about grading students. This grading system's most active elements are educators because they design the grading system, take the required precautions and evaluate the students' progress. Although summative assessment is practical when grading or marking was taken into account, it is not sufficient for the education process since it is the assessment of learning but not helping the learning which is one of the purposes of assessment and, as mentioned by Black (2002), it is not beneficial for students but important for schools and parents. Because of this reason, formative assessment methods were tried to be used in education.

Formative assessment is "an assessment that provides diagnostic information about a student's achievement level" (Mislevy & Knowles, 2002, p.37). These types of assessments' primary aim is

considered as giving feedback in order to increase learning by Black (2002), Gipps (2003) and Sambell et al. (2017). The objective of this assessment type is not evaluating students as successful or unsuccessful by grading their learning level but showing them their powerful and weak sides that they can be able to develop themselves. Because of this reason, it is not carried out only at the end of the learning but several times in the process (Strijbos, 2011). By correcting what is wrong, formative assessment does not let mistakes become errors and students who are informed about their progress do better in the next learning activities. The activity system of the formative assessment from a teacher's perspective can be examined in Figure 2 to make a comparison with summative assessment.

Mediating artefacts (assessment tools): high-inference tasks that encourage conversation and disclosure: fuzzy grade indicators

Subjects: teh teacher, other students of the learner. In other words, whoever is creating feedback on the work

Objects of activity: creating feedback to student learning

Rules and conventions: maximum disclosure encouraged so as to improve learning: errors are valued, because learning comes from fixing old mistakes (and then making new ones, which get fixed in the next cycle)

Community of practice: other students, teachers, and administrators working on the programme-many informal connections made on fairly equal terms.

Division of labour: various people flexibly contribute and receive feedback

(Knight & Yorke, 2003, p.18)

Figure 2. Activity system of formative assessment from a teacher's perspective

Figure 2 above makes it apparent that formative assessment is carried out to give feedback to the students and not only the educator but also the learner is responsible for the evaluation process. Formative assessment tasks also encourage conversation and increase learning. Compared with summative one, formative is not the evaluation of the final process but mostly a helping system that will start a new process and increase learning by minimising the learning deficiencies.

Although there are other detailed types of assessments mentioned by researchers such as ipsative assessment by Gipps (2003), placement assessment, observation of learning, short term achievement assessment, diagnostic assessment, achievement assessment and proficiency assessment by Nation and Macalister (2009), formative and summative assessments are main distinctions to be taken into account while planning an assessment task. Aim of the educator is critical in this choice, but Giraldo (2018) mentions that "educators with language assessment training used assessment to ımprove teaching and learning, whereas those with no training used it solely obtain grades" (p.181) in a study.

To increase the effectiveness of the assessment, it is significant to take four items which are reliability, validity, accountability and practicality into consideration. Reliability and validity are two most significant elements which are examined by different researchers. Broadfoot (2003) expresses that validity is the expression used to explain whether the test measures what is desired to assess; however, reliability is about how correct the results are gathered via the test. It is not important whether it is evaluated by the teacher "A" or "B", a reliable test should show the same results and similar scores on different situations. According to Black (2002), errors in marking, variations in grading, the variability of pupils from day to day or question to question are the points that threats the reliability of a test. These items decrease the reliability levels of the tests, but Nation and Macalister's (2009) suggestion which is applying the test under the same situations can be helpful in increasing the reliability level of a test. Reliability is crucial as the correct evaluation will affect the process in a

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better way. Although there are some risks while providing the evaluation, taking some precautions will solve the problems.

Another element that influences test results is validity which is defined by Gibbs (2003) as "the extent to which an assessment measures what it purports to measure" (p.vii). If a teacher tries to measure the reading ability of the students, s/he cannot ask questions which assess students' grammatical knowledge. Black (2002) mentions three types of validity. The first one is content validity which can be explained as the level of the relationship of syllabus and question asked to the students. Teachers should ask questions only about the subjects they studied in the classroom. Construct validity is the second kind of validity according to which questions that are asked to the students should be able to assess what the teacher wants to assess. If the teacher wants to understand students' knowledge about a subject, s/he can ask true/false or multiple-choice questions, but it isn't easy to understand students analysing abilities by using such questions. The last type of validity is called Predictive validity. In this validity, tests results are used to predict students' levels and improve the learning program. How correct the predictions about students' levels are constitutes predictive validity. Nation and Macalister (2009) add face validity to the list. This validity type is similar to content and construct validity but does not look at the test in detail. It says that if a test is a reading test, it should look like a reading test, not a grammar test, etc. Even though there are different versions of the validity, the main point is how proper a test is in assessing the ability which is tried to be assessed.

Practicality and accountability are the other two elements which are crucial in the production and application of an assessment test. According to Nation and Macalister (2009), practicality is about cost, time, people, and easiness. A practical test should not cost much money in the production, application and evaluation processes. The time which is needed while designing and scoring the test should not be a lot. The application and evaluation processes need people. A test which requires too many people is not practical. Black (2002) thinks that schools have a responsibility against the nation because they use the communities' sources so that they should prove the effectiveness of their operations. Practicality shows the level of this effectiveness and closeness of effectiveness and used sources constitutes the accountability. An effective assessment process requires four items which are validity, reliability, practicality and accountability. Choosing the right technique and being careful about these elements is only the starting point of assessment.

Selecting the right method of assessment and applying all the validity, reliability, practicality, and accountability elements are not sufficient for a good assessment. There are various foundations of assessment according to researchers. For example; Pellegrino et al. (2001) think that cognition, observation and interpretation are three essential features of assessment. Cognition is about the theoretical side of assessment which also includes the beliefs about students. Observation is the process in which an educator tries to understand students' levels. Interpretation is about using the data gathered with observation and reaching a conclusion about students'' or programs' success. Boud (2009) and Osborne and Wagor (2004) also examined the process of assessment in a detailed way and gave some clues for an assessment task. As reported by Boud (2009), a good assessment task should be authentic and holistic, give importance to the process not to the product, help students' learning, involve others in the assessment activities, not compare students with others, link the activities of various units or courses and build in awareness of co-production. Boud's statements are supporters of Osborne and Wagor who also give information about integration, ongoing assessment types and giving attention not only to the outcomes but also to the experiences lead to these outcomes. Using a method and other elements of assessments properly also requires to be careful about some simple points such as selecting authentic and holistic methods and giving importance to the process in order to have a beneficial assessment task.

Although these are the characteristics and rules that should be obeyed to create an efficient assessment task, ideas about assessment are changing day by day and, in the 21st century, assessment is associated with excellence, high standards, prestige, and competition as stated in Wyatt-Smith and Cummings (2009). The continuous change and development of the concept of assessment are also supported by Broadfoot (2003), who expresses the change of social imperatives for the assessment. Broadfoot (2003) also arranges the expectations from the assessment in the 21st century as giving importance on formative and learning integrated assessment, developing teachers' understanding and expertise on assessment, increasing the importance of validity, integrating curriculum and assessment, and not only assessing the individuals but also using a combination of individual scores to evaluate the program. These expectations which are generally reasons of social, economic and technological changes according to Pellegrino et al. (2001) should be fulfilled, but this is not possible with using classical assessment methods since they make the learner a passive subject which is tested to carry out the objectives of an institution (McPhee & D'Esposito, 2018).

McPhee and D'Esposito (2018) mention in the result section of their study that students' expectations and academic qualifications of an assessment are on the diverse sides. Because classical methods only try to understand students' knowledge level, they do not check what students can do with this knowledge. As mentioned in Carless (2017), a well-designed assessment is a positive factor for meaningful learning; nevertheless, classical assessment methods just ask students to memorise specific knowledge. This idea is also approved by Wilks (2005), who reveals that most of our assessment tasks, give fewer opportunities to skilled students.

Another concept that should be explained here is homework, and it is described by Farrell and Danby (2015) as "school-prescribed tasks undertaken by children and usually under the supervision of an adult, most often a parent within the home" (cited in Clarke et al., 2020, p.563). Although it can be explained with many words, its effects have been under debate for 100 years because the ideas about its benefits and negative effects have shown differences. According to Vatterott (2018), there are different periods in the history of homework. In the first period, it was seen as one of the main elements of the education as most of the memorisations was carried out at home, and that process was named as homework. Then, people started to think that homework has adverse effects on students' health, social life and even their academic success. In the third period, it was started to be given importance especially in the USA after Russians launched the Sputnik 1 satellite in 1957. Today, the benefits of homework are under question again.

Using homework has more than one reason according to school administrators and teachers. Teachers think that homework helps students repeat the previous course and provides permanent learning (Özenç, 2020). Özenç's study supports that students repeat what they have learned during the last day with the help of homework and this activity makes their knowledge to be stored in the long term memory which means to be permanent. Vatterott (2018), who also touches the repetition benefit of homework, mentions that people believe homework teaches responsibility, lots of homework means to have a proper curriculum and being a good teacher or student is related to giving or doing homework. Studies about teachers' ideas on homework also approve the thoughts mentioned above. Buyukalan and Altinay (2018), who are even justified by Yavich and Davidovitch (2020), found that teachers have positive beliefs about homework because they think that homework increases learning.

Whether homework is beneficial or not is frequently studied by researchers, but results of these studies show dissimilarities. Although there are studies such as Jerrima et al. (2019), who tried to find the relationship of homework and academic success and found no relationship between these variables, there are also studies which reveal homework's benefits for the students' academic life. One of these studies is carried out by Martin (2020), who tried to find out the effects of homework on 122 novice German learners' pronunciation. Results of the study show positive effects on behalf of homework. Researcher expressed that homework based pronunciation was effective. In another study,

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Mustafa et al. (2019) attempted to examine the impact of paper-based and online vocabulary homework with an experimental study. Results revealed that both experimental groups who used paper-based or online homework were more successful than the control group that not used any kind of homework. Results of Cleynena et al. (2020) who studied the effects of a homework program on engineering students and discovered positive effects of homework are also supported by Yavich and Davidovitch (2020), but Yavich and Davidovitch (2020) also signify the long term benefits of homework such as teaching time-management and increasing problem-solving abilities. Karatabak et al. (2020), who researched the distance education with and without homework, found that homework creates positive differences in distance education.

Homework whose benefits mentioned above includes various elements named by Cooper (1989) as students' habits, classroom level, amount of homework, homework's goals and physical environment of students' homes (cited in Yavich and Davidovitch, 2020). Since all these elements affect the quality of good homework, teachers should plan their homework better as only well-planned homework can positively affect students when negative results are taken into account. According to Baran (2019), one of the characteristşc of homework should be its ability to let students decide on something because this will motivate them. This study takes into account these items and Baran's idea since it allows students to design their homework as they like it.

An assessment task has various features mentioned above, and its purpose is not only to understand what a student knows about a particular subject, and classical assessment methods do not complete the aim of an assessment task which is required to fulfil the expectations in the 21st century. In addition to this, homework can have short-term and long-term benefits for students if applied correctly. Because of these reasons, this study tries to use a different homework task as a formal assessment method and understand students' ideas about this task. Therefore, research questions of the study were developed as;

- Did students like the process, and do they think it is beneficial for them?
- Did students have any difficulties in the process?
- Did students learn new things?
- Do the students choose classical assessment methods or homework like this?

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

In this qualitative study, it was tried to get students' perceptions after asking them to prepare a coursebook mentioning them that it will be used as a formal assessment method for their exam to solve students' high anxiety problems and generate one of the purposes of assessment in this century which is to let learners use what they have learned. Preparing a coursebook that includes reading, listening, speaking and writing activities was challenging because students were asked to create all the activities without getting any part of them, except the pictures, from other sources. So, students wrote reading texts and recorded listening audios on their own. Depending on Patton's (1990) ideas about using unstructured, open-ended interviews to get direct quotations from students about their experience while writing their course books, qualitative data collection method was used in the study due to researcher's aim of also not hindering participants' ideas. It was believed, in this study, that classical assessment methods are problematic because they generally understand the level of students' knowledge but not how this knowledge can be used by the students and these classical methods do not increase learning which is one of the purposes of assessment in the 21st century. Likewise, it was pretended to think that students do not like classical assessment methods which increase their anxiety levels. Because of this reason, this qualitative study was carried out, and it was tried to gather students' ideas about using a hard work instead of a short exam.

2.2. Procedure

This study was carried out in a spring term of a university, and as a first step in the study, students were divided into groups. All the groups of students are given homework as they should prepare a coursebook which should include grammar, reading, writing, listening and speaking activities, and they were informed as this will be one of the marks of their exams. These activities should be prepared by the students which means they should not get anything from other sources except the pictures. Students in the same group should prepare activities about different subjects because they will combine their units and handle it to the researcher as a complete book. With this method, it was aimed to mark students while working both in groups and individually. The reason for this is to let group members help the students who have problems but also not to let students, who did not add anything to their friends, get good marks since one of the aims of this method was to give students the chance of learning while being assessed. At the end of the process, students' ideas are collected by using an unstructured interview.

2.3. Participants and Setting

Forty participants from the prep-class of a state university which is situated on the east part of Turkey joined the study. These students will study in the English Language and Literature Department after finishing this class, and they are generally at the same age, but it is the second year of some of them in the prep class. The homework which will be evaluated as a formal exam was students' semester homework, but they also had time to combine the units and create a book after starting the second term. The number of the participants is sufficient for the study because as mentioned by Dornyei (2007), sampling size and how representative they are when compared with the universe of the study are not important in a qualitative study as the significant point is to find individuals who can provide a rich amount of information. While selecting the participants, a practical and highly used method, convenience sampling was used. Using this method helped the researcher be closer to the process, and there was a heterogeneous group as no one excluded from the study.

2.4. Instrument and Data Analysis

An unstructured interview developed by the researcher in accordance with the study's aim was used to get information from the participants. As mentioned by Seliger and Shohamy (1989), most interviews used in qualitative studies are open-ended, unstructured and informal ones. The interview used in this study is also an unstructured and informal one which was applied after students finished the homework that will be a formal assessment method for them. There was a limited number of questions in the interview because the researcher desired not to bore the students and get their real thoughts about the process. Using unstructured interviews helped the researcher not restrict students' ideas and not direct them to a definite result.

Data were analysed manually using a thematic method because there weren't many participants, and it was not difficult to handle the gathered information. Manual analysis method also helped the researcher to be aware of the process and evaluate the meaning relation of references created by the students. In order to provide the reliability of the analysis, the researcher only accepted voluntary students to join the study and these students were Informed about their rights to withdraw from the study anytime they desire, supported the created themes with participants' ideas, re-analysed the data and created different themes a month after the first analyses which were similar with the first analysis, asked participants to give detailed information about conflicting statements, and another co-worker was asked to check the process. Themes in the study supported with direct ideas of the students. These supporting sentences increases the reliability of the themes. Collected data analyzed two times in order to check whether the same results will be found or not. And the same themes were created in these analyses. In addition to these, sentences which created conflict in the analysis process

supported with more information acquired from the same participants and another researcher checked the process which are similar with Cohen's et al. (2005) ways of providing reliability in qualitative studies. The benefits of getting help from different researchers in the analyse process in order to provide reliability is also menationed by Guion et al. (2002).

3. RESULTS

3.1. Students' Ideas about the Benefits of the Assessment Method and whether They Liked the Process or not
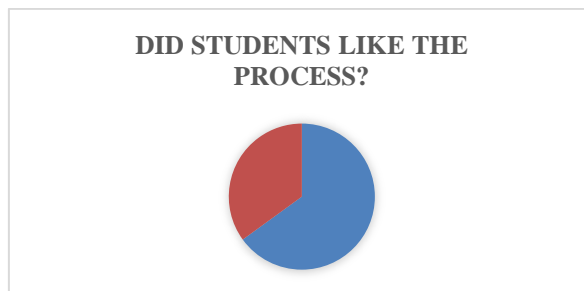

Figure 3. Whether students liked the process or not?

Most of the students in the study liked the assessment process. 26 of the 40 students think that this type of assessment is enjoyable when compared with classical assessment methods. One of the participants, Ayşe, said that *"I learnt many things while doing this homework. This homework was both enjoyable and instructive. Preparation process of the homework was so enjoyable"*. Cemre is also one of the students who think that this homework was an enjoyable process by expressing that *"I like using computers and Word software so that this homework was enjoyable for me"*. It is understood from the expressions of the Cemre that these kinds of homework also let students engage with something they like. Most of the guys in the 21st century like using technological gadgets instead of using just pen and paper that using these kinds of homework will help them get fun in the process. Statements of the Ali who also enjoyed the process bring forward that these kinds of assessments can also provide an emotion of satisfaction as s/he signified that *"being able to write a book was enjoyable for me"*. Other answers show that each student liked different things such as using computer, preparing vocabulary exercises, preparing grammar exercises and finding information from the internet because they have different personalities. These kinds of assessments provide students to find something they like in the process. It is understood from the findings that students enjoyed the process, and this assessment method satisfied them. So their motivation and self-esteem will increase at the time and end of the process which can increase the course success.
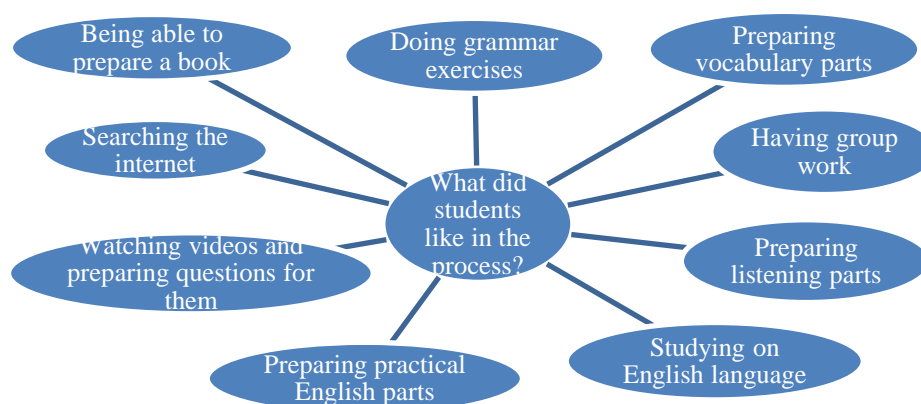

Figure 4. Different elements that students liked in the book preparing process

Carless (2017) thinks that students favour for the assessment designs which have some choices for them. When they are given the chance of choosing something in the assessment process, they can feel a sense of belonging and do better in the assessment. Feeling that sense can also help students feel comfortable in the assessment process. The assessment method used in this study just asks students to complete a project and lets them decide every detail. Leaving them this autonomy can help them feel free and get away from the barriers such as anxiety which they will probably have in a classical assessment process. According to Pellegrino et al. (2001), renewed attention of performance assessment methods in the 1990s asks students to carry out more authentic tasks. The assessment method used in this study also lets students perform this aim. Because all the materials students put in the book that was being written as an assessment process had to be created by them. These materials can also be used as sources in other courses, and in this way, the assessment process will provide another benefit for the language learning classrooms.

Gipps (2003) and Black (2002) believe that assessment should not be a static activity as it has different aims, and one of them is providing learning. An assessment process should be beneficial for the students. Participants of this study assume that the process was beneficial for them. Although 14 students expressed that they did not like the process, only eight students think it is not beneficial. This means even the students who did not like the process accept the benefits of it. Students generally expressed the assessment method's ability to revise the previous knowledge which also supports the learning process. 10 of the 32 students who think the process is beneficial declared that this assessment method helped them revise the grammar or learn new grammatical rules and 3 of them gave importance to the assessment methods ability to teach new words. Especially Canan and Emel's ideas about the benefits of this assessment method are important as Canan mentioned that *"we are teacher candidates and we should know how to express ourselves or explain the subjects. Because of this reason, this assessment method is beneficial"*, and Emel indicated that *"It was beneficial because I want to be a teacher in the future and it helped me to find new techniques while explaining a subject"*.

It is beneficial because it is	reinforcing the grammatical subjects
	a chance of coming across new words
	reminding forgotten rules
	helping to find new ways to teach something
	increasing the reading speed
	helping us to get aware of my mistakes
	helping us to get ready for the exams

Figure 5. Some benefits of such an assessment task expressed by the students

One of the deficiencies of the assessment processes is that they generally decrease the motivation and self-esteem but increase the anxiety level of the students. Because of these reasons, students are afraid of being assessed; however, the aim of the assessment process is just understanding students' levels. As understood from the results above, the process adopted in this study is beneficial for increasing the students' motivation and self-esteem but decreasing their anxiety levels while being assessed. This will create a better chance for the teacher to have reliable results which are not affected by the outside factors. Using such assessment methods can make students join the process willingly and not think it as a duty to be carried out. Students' explanations make it clear that this assessment method is advantageous. It helps students to learn new things or revise previous learnings. An assessment is not only a feedback providing process; it also aims to increase learning. The method used in this study can realise this aim because students will get new knowledge or abilities while collecting information for their tasks.

3.2. Difficulties Students Encountered in the Process

In addition to the benefits and joy it provided, students also had difficulties while completing the assessment task. 32 of the 40 students think that they had some problems while doing their homework which will be a formal assessment for them. Mehmet expressed his/her ideas as *"I had difficulties while making editing by using the computer"*. Participants in this study had different problems according to their knowledge and personalities. Although Mehmet had problems about using computer for the editing process, other participants did not mention such a problem. Most referred problems are having difficulties while planning and finding materials, not being able to decide how to make the book enjoyable, writing grammar activities and creating listening exercise. For example, Hasan had difficulties about finding pictures for his/her book, but Gamze had challenges while preparing the grammar exercise, or Ömer revealed that *"I had difficulties while trying to find how to present the subject enjoyably"*, but Oğuz's difficulty was finding the listening parts.

Group work
Finding sources
Creating new materials
Deciding the correct level
Explaining grammar rules
Using the words in the correct form
Preparing the practical English parts
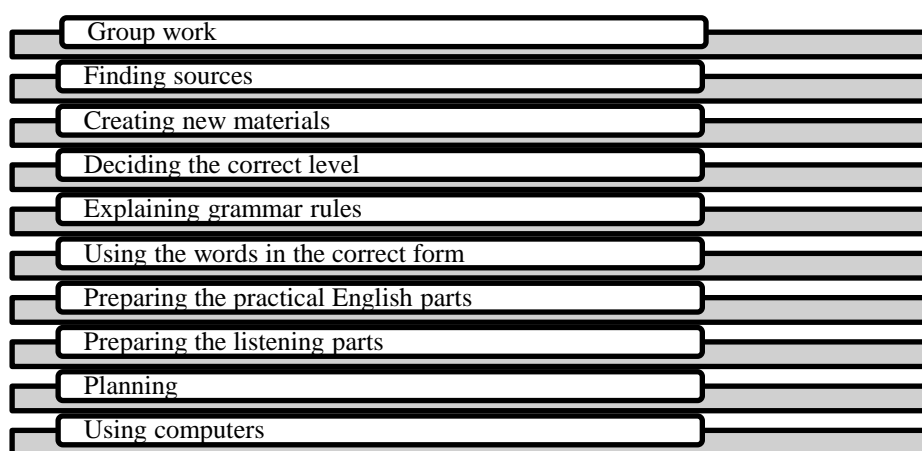Preparing the listening parts
Planning
Using computers

Figure 6. Difficulties that students came across

It is clear from the findings that students not only enjoyed the process and benefited from it but also had some problems; nevertheless, these problems differ from student to student which can be an indicator of that students generally had difficulties about the areas in which they have deficiencies. Assessment also aims to help learning and students who lack knowledge of a definite area can develop themselves with the help of these kinds of tasks. So, the problems students encounter can be used beneficially as a learning chance. As students had the possibility of trying to do something more than once in a free atmosphere, they can increase their knowledge in which they have problems. Language teachers can use such tasks not only for understanding the deficiencies of specific information or knowledge but also uncovering information gaps which both students and teachers were not aware of and filling them.

3.3. New Items that Students Learnt in the Process

Twenty-six of the participants in this study believe that they learnt new things while preparing their assessment homework. New things that students learnt in this study can be listed as rules that they had not realised before, new words, structures they had forgotten, making some blurry points clear, developing the planning ability, new methods of language practices, developing the reading speed, practical information about daily English, new computer skills, and new information from the reading passages. For instance; Ömer said that *"yes, this assessment homework provided me to see the words I know but not remember"*. Harun and İclal touched the point that they learned new grammatical rules or repeated them and completed their information lacks. Harun directly expressed that *"As I explained the grammar subjects which I had had problems, it can be said that I learned*

them better" and İclal pointed the effect of this assessment method on grammar learning by declaring that *"I had had problems about the grammar rules that I was using and I corrected some of them".* Cemre supported his friends by revealing the benefits of this assessment homework on grammar learning and lexical development. Students' declarations clarify the ability of this assessment method on learning new things.
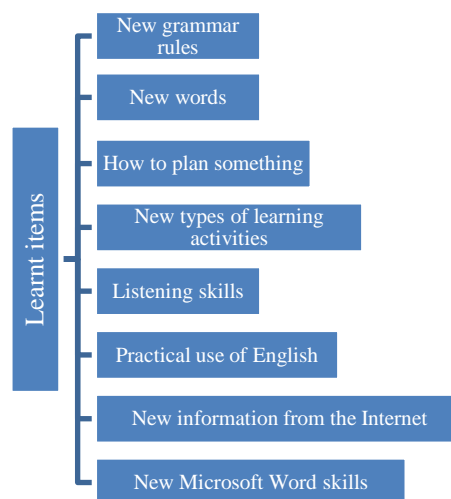

Figure7. What did students learn in the process?

Black (2002), Gipps (2003), Wyatt-Smith and Cumming (2009), King (2016), Carless (2017) and Swain and Pendergast (2018) all express the importance of assessment in learning new things in their studies. Researchers think that assessment should help to learn instead of just measuring the amount of learning. According to Swain and Pendergast (2018), the main aims of assessment are assessment for learning, assessment as learning, and assessment of learning. Classical assessment methods just realise the last aim mentioned by Swain and Pendergast; however, the assessment method used in this study can also complete other aims. This assessment method helps students learn new things as understood by the participants' own words. It can be used to provide information for future learning situations or directly understanding students' language use errors. Most of the classical assessment methods make it challenging to understand whether the grammatical misuse is a mistake or error, but an assessment method used in this study will also help teacher on this situation and be beneficial for future planning.

Renzella and Cain (2017) think that task-oriented assessment is an innovative learning-teaching system. This study is in the same direction with the researchers since it not only helped in the evaluation process but also increased students' knowledge of various areas. Participants' ideas make it clear that the assessment method used in this study was beneficial in the development of both linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. Students were able to learn new things from other areas such as developing their computer skills and getting new information from the reading or listening passages. Using such assessment tasks can provide students with practical linguistic and non-linguistic knowledge. These kinds of assessment methods can help teachers even use the assessment time for learning activities.

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3.4. Students' Choices about Classical Assessment Methods or an Assessment Like this

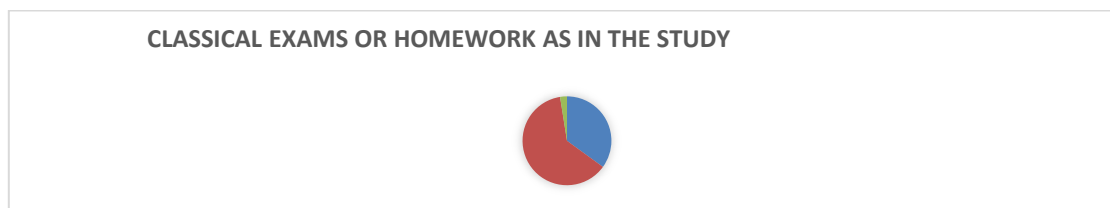**CLASSICAL EXAMS OR HOMEWORK AS IN THE STUDY**

Figure 8: *Students' choices for a classical exam or homework as a formal assessment method for the future*

Contrary to the 25 students who desired to have an assessment task as in this study, only 14 students wanted to have a classical exam after the study. Nazım desired to have such an assessment task in the future, not a classical exam and mentioned his/her ideas as *"I want to prepare homework because we study more and get more experienced while doing this"*. Hasan, who also desired to have an assessment homework, revealed that *"I want to do homework. I think I can prove myself in a better way with homework"*. Eylül also supported homework by expressing that *"I would prefer such a homework. Because it at least developed our creativity"*. Students who thought that a classical exam is better did not give a proper reason for this. Nevertheless, some of the explanations of those students reveal their aim. For instance; Güven thinks that a homework like this takes a lot of time so that he/she wants to have an exam, Canan desires to have a classical exam because she/he thinks that she/he is lazy and Hülya is eager to have a classical exam since he/she thinks that exams are better for evaluating their knowledge. Only Hülya gave a reasonable explanation, but it should be taken into account that assessment's only aim is not understanding students' proficiency level, it should also help students learn new things in the 21st century. Assessment is desired to be used for learning and the method which provides this is not a classical exam but an assessment task as used in this study.

Halpern (2004) expresses some of the expectations from the people who graduated from a program as "methods and basic research concept in the discipline, critical thinking skills, information gathering and synthesis, skills gained through practical experiences and interpersonal skills" (pp.19-20), and Broadfoot (2003) reveals the desired abilities of young people as problem-solving ability, personal effectiveness, thinking skills and willingness to accept change. Contrary to the classical assessment methods that do not help students gain these abilities, an assessment task used in this study can help individuals evaluate and develop their abilities or progress on these items. Students mostly chose an assessment task rather than classical exams because as mentioned in Esteves et al. (2019), they do not like a single moment of evaluation. Assessment is not just for deciding the individual's level; it should add something to him/her. Classical assessment methods are generally not sufficient to fulfil the learning needs of the students or criteria required for a qualified person of the century contrary to the assessment method used in this study. Language educators who use such assessment tasks can help his/her students develop themselves as an individual who has the abilities this century required.

4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

Language learning is a combination of planning, teaching and assessment whose primary aim is to support teaching according to Gipps (2003). In their studies, Sambell et al. (2017) reached the idea that if an assessment method lacks authenticity, is narrow in scope, have little long term benefit, fails to reward students' efforts and rely mostly on recall and memory, it is a bad assessment method. Classical summative assessment exams generally have most of the characteristics mentioned by the researchers above. In addition to that, the idea of being assessed and marked probably increases the anxiety level of the participants, and this increase has negative effects on success (Putranta & Jumadi, 2019). Thus, assessment methods that are compatible with modern education methods and help to learn should be applied.

This study tried to show positive effects of a different assessment method by collecting participants' ideas with an unstructured interview and reached a conclusion supported by the Gipps (2003), who tried to mention the characteristics of a bad assessment method. Results showed that most of the students liked the process and think that it is beneficial for them because students had more time than a classical assessment and that decreased the effects of other outside elements such as being ill or demotivated at the time of an exam. Students were given the chance to do their own plans, create the required materials, and use various sources that helped them develop themselves. The method and its outcomes were both authentic and helped students learn something that they will not forget in a short time. Although students in this study had some difficulties, the benefits of the method are more than the effects of these difficulties. Students learned new things or remembered the subjects they learned before. As understood from students' ideas, this process also helped them by decreasing the exam anxiety and motivating them to do their best.

Results of this study can be beneficial if they are taken into account while planning an assessment task for the students. Teachers should not only use tasks that activate students since assessment methods should also be compatible with those tasks as mentioned by Gipps (2003). Assessment methods such as projects or homework that let students use their creativity and problem-solving abilities can be more beneficial and help learners to fulfil the requirements mentioned by Halpern (2004) and Broadfoot (2003) in the previous paragraphs. In order to understand what students can do with their knowledge instead of just assessing what they can express (because students are sometimes not able to express what they know in the exam), teachers should apply long-term assessment methods as used in this study. Using these kinds of assessments can help them increase learning, decrease affective barriers, and develop students' self-esteem.

Even if this study is vital about expressing the benefits of homework as a formal assessment method from students' perspectives, it can be developed by using different tasks and data collection tools such as quantitative tests in addition to just an interview and teacher observation. Also comparing students' previous marks and the results of their assessment tasks can provide more information for the researchers. This study was carried out in a prep-class of a state university, and it can also be applied to more students at different age groups or language levels

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