The Role of Portfolio Assessment and Quizzes on Class Attendance and Language Achievement *

Semahat AYSU [1]

Abstract

The aim of the study is to investigate the impact of placement test, pop-quizzes and portfolio assessment on class attendance and language achievement. The study also encompasses gender and faculty as other independent variables that affect the students' class attendance and language achievement. The data gathered from a total of 307 students studying English in the elective preparatory class of a state university in Turkey are analysed through SPSS 25. In the study, descriptive and inferential statistics are implemented. Descriptive analyses such as frequency and percentage are applied in order to reveal information about participants. Independent Sample t-tests, one-way ANOVA, post hoc tests and regression analyses are also performed to determine the relationship between dependent and independent variables. The findings in the study show that portfolio tasks are the most important factors for students' class attendance and language achievement, which demonstrates that authentic assessment is an important factor. It is found that males do not attend the classes more than females but females are more successful than males. In addition, the faculty as another independent variable does not have a significant effect on class attendance but engineering faculty has a significant impact on language achievement rather than economics faculty.

Keywords: Placement test, pop-quizzes, portfolio assessment, class attendance, language achievement

1. INTRODUCTION

English preparatory class at this state university is not compulsory, students prefer to learn English and start language education in the fall term. In the beginning of fall term, students take placement test and according to their test result, they are taught English in different language classes. At the end of the spring term, they are supposed to reach B1 level. Students have high instrumental motivation to learn English (Aysu, 2018) at the beginning of the fall term rather than integrative motivation although they study English at preparatory class voluntarily. However, students' attendance decreases and rate of fail increases throughout the fall and spring terms or they drop out from the class. Evans and Tragant (2020) examined the reasons of adult learners why they drop out and what they state about demotivated factors. Students mentioned that they had reached their goals, they had negative opinions towards language, school or classmates. They lost their motivation or they though they did not learn anything. Dropout reasons are listed as follows: lack of time, not relevant for work, personal reasons, cost of classes, method used in class, lack of progress, teacher, language difficulty and resource. They point out that teachers and course are still important factors in students' motivation and class attendance.

In the literature, there is a growing body of studies that investigates the relationship between language anxiety, learning style, motivation, self-efficacy or self-confidence and language achievement (Atadil-Kuzucu & Kartal, 2020; Doğan & Tuncer, 2016; Horwitz, 2001; Li & Zhang, 2021; Melouah, 2013; Rahman, Mazlan, Kummin, Yasin & Meerah, 2010). They have found out that these variables have affected students' achievement. Also, other studies discuss the effects of authentic (portfolio) assessment or standardized (traditional) tests on language performance or achievement

(Aksu-Ataç, 2012; Azim & Khan, 2012; Ennis, 2018; Herrington & Herrington, 1998; Koh, 2017). According to these studies, students are active during the authentic assessment, they engage in what they learn and they feel motivated and self-confidence since they have experience on real-life tasks. However, the effects of aforementioned variables such as gender, faculty, placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes have not been examined in terms of students' class attendance and language achievement in Turkish context. Therefore, this present study aims to answer the following research questions.

1-   Does gender affect students' class attendance and language achievement?

2-   Does faculty affect students' class attendance and language achievement?

3-   Do placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes affect students' class attendance and language achievement?

1.1. Factors on Class Attendance and Language Achievement

Learning a language is much more complicated than learning other things as it consists of more than rules but "it involves an alteration in self-image, the adoption of new social and cultural behaviours and ways of being, and therefore has a significant impact on the social nature of the learner" (Williams & Burden, 2000, p. 115). So, there are many factors which affect the language achievement of students and anxiety, which impedes language learning or interferes with performance, has been discussed since 1960s as one of these factors (Horwitz, 2001). Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986) state that some students can learn easily in different situation rather than in a foreign language setting and offer a question "What, then, prevents them from achieving their desired goal?" (p. 125). They design the instrument (the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale-FLCAS) in order to measure the relationship between anxiety and language achievement. Using this instrument, many studies were conducted and they showed that there is significant negative correlation between the scores from FLCAS and language achievement of students (Horwitz, 2001). In this study, FLCAS will not be used in order to measure the anxiety level of student. Yet, as previous studies show that students have high anxiety level during the exam and they cannot perform accordingly. Therefore, authentic assessment or process-based assessment rather than standardized tests or product-based assessment are proposed. In this study, both assessment types will be examined.

Another factor which has a great effect on language learning is motivation. According to Williams and Burden (2000), motivation is defined as reasons lead people to do what they want with great desire and interest in order to achieve their goal. Also, people should sustain their effort during the process. People are motivated by instrumentally or integratively (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The influence of this factor on language learning could be examined through the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), which is developed by Gardner (1985). Meta-analysis shows that there is a strongly positive correlation in terms of the relationship between motivation and language achievement (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). Svalberg (2009) points out a new notion "language engagement" and she notes that studies on motivation aim to examine what the underlying reasons are to engage and how students are encouraged and what effects might be on language learning. In this study, the grades that students get in Pop-up quizzes might be considered as an instrumental motivation and they attend class regularly to get extra credits. Furthermore, portfolio assessment could be regarded as another motivation resource in order to engage in learning. Thus, the effects of pop-quizzes and portfolio assessment on class attendance and language achievement will be examined in this study.

1.2. Assessment and Evaluation in Language Teaching

The notions "assessment and evaluation" are sometimes used interchangeably in the process of the students' learning achievement. However, the former one is a narrower concept than the second one since it is the one part of the evaluation (Gultom, 2016). Evaluation is "the systematic collection and analysis of all relevant information necessary to promote the improvement of a curriculum, and assess its effectiveness and efficiency, as well as the participants' attitudes within the context of the particular institutions involved" (Brown, 1989, p. 223). As Brown (1989) points out, there are three dimensions of evaluation: formative vs summative evaluations, process vs product evaluations and quantitative vs qualitative evaluations. In other words, evaluation includes the whole process in language teaching and learning. Therefore, the concern of this study is assessment.

Assessment has two forms: A test might be implemented in order to show the learners' proficiency/achievement or a portfolio which consists of the learner's documents such as essays, letter, audio or video recordings might be used (Council of Europe). That is, assessment can be done after each lesson and teachers can assess students' participation and involvement. In the assessment process, portfolio and projects might be used or a final score which "is based on the percentage of the assessment given through the daily, mid-semester, semester, and final test, and based on the one using other instrument" can be used (Gultom, 2016, pp. 196-197). In other words, standardized (traditional) tests or alternative (authentic) assessment might be used for achievement. "Standardized tests are usually based on multiple choice items, fill-in items and short, restricted-response tasks" while alternative assessment includes performance assessment or portfolio assessment (Aksu-Ataç, 2012, p.11). Although standardized tests have some advantages such as administering test efficiently, scoring objectively and in a reliable way and cost-effectiveness, these tests do not focus on the higher-order thinking skills. However, authentic assessment consists of projects, portfolios, posters, debates or presentations and they concentrate on complex issues and they lead students to self-directed learning (Koh, 2017). Therefore, the performance of students on the real-life tasks is examined through authentic assessment while the performance of students is inferred from standardized tests (Litchfield & Dempsey, 2015; Wiggins, 1990). According to Herrington and Herrington (1998), standardized tests such as quizzes and tests are used while assuming the objective reality and the answers can be categorized as wrong or true. However, this type of assessment is not appropriate for the constructivist learning since students engage with the tasks and they work collaboratively. Therefore, they put emphasis on the use of alternative forms of assessment and they name some of them such as "authentic assessment, performance-based assessment, portfolio assessment, and coursework assessment" (p.307).

Fox, Freeman, Hughes and Murphy (2017) highlight the benefits of authentic assessment and it encourages students to be active and improves their learning as this type of assessment is relevant with the real life experience. On the other hand, they state that there are some challenges during the authentic assessment such as resistance of students or lack of time and resources. In order to overcome these challenges, they propose a template in their study. This template includes the following steps: "Identification of desired learning outcomes and alignment with task, student communication and consultation, the development of rubrics and marking criteria, assessment implementation, scoring and interpretation of results, evaluation and reflection" (pp.3236- 3237).

Aksu-Ataç (2012) lists some reasons to use authentic assessment (pp.13-14):

Authentic assessments are direct measures.

Authentic assessments capture constructive nature of learning.

Authentic assessments integrate teaching, learning and assessment.

Authentic assessments provide multiple paths to demonstration.

3

She also notes that a teacher does not have to choose one of these ways. However, s/he can mix some of them to address the needs of learners.

Wiggins (1990) compares the authentic assessment with traditional assessment as it is seen in the following:

In the authentic assessment,	In the traditional assessment,
*students are required to perform effectively while preparing their tasks	*students are required to recognize or recall out of the learning context
*students are required to make some research; write, discuss or revise and present what they learn	*students are required to do the test with paper and pencil in a limited time
*students are required to design their own products	-students are required to choose or write one piece of information about what they learn
*students can rehearse for the real life through the difficulties and challenges.	*students should recall some discrete and simple parts.
different criteria for different tasks are used for scoring.	there is only one correct answer.

Litchfield and Dempsey (2015) do not disregard traditional assessment but they suggest that traditional assessment should be used to assess the basic skills as it is fast and easy while authentic assessment should be used after students master the language because they should use the language in a meaningful and authentic way.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

In this study, it was aimed to examine to what extent the traditional assessment such as placement test and quizzes or portfolio assessment affect students' class attendance and language achievement. Furthermore, the effect of gender and faculty as other independent variables on dependent variables was investigated. Regarding this aim, quantitative analysis was employed and following research questions were answered.

1.4. Research Questions

1- Does gender affect students' class attendance and language achievement?
2- Does faculty affect students' class attendance and language achievement?
3- Do placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes affect students' class attendance and language achievement?

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Design

Descriptive survey research design was used in this study, based on a quantitative method, for which data were gathered through portfolio assessment and standard tests such as placement test, pop-up quizzes and achievement test. Placement test was administered to students at the beginning of the term and language achievement test was conducted at the end of the term while portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes were given to students and their class attendance was gathered throughout the term.

2.2. Setting and Participants

In the academic year 2019-2020, a total of 307 students whose majors vary studied English at an elective preparatory class of a state university in Turkey. Their English proficiency level ranged from beginner to intermediate and there were more male students than female students in English classes. In the following tables, demographic information about participants is showed. As it is seen in Table 1, 44.3% of participants are females (n=136) while 55.7% of them are males (n=171). Table 2 illustrates the faculty of participants. Most of the students are engineering students (60.9%) and from the faculty of Science and Literature there are only 12 students (3.9%). The percentages of students from Architecture, Economics and Health are 8.1%, 22.5%, 4.5%, respectively.

4

Table 1. Descriptive statistics by gender

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Female	136	44.3	44.3	44.3
	Male	171	55.7	55.7	100
	Total	307	100	100	

Table 2. Descriptive statistics by faculty

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Engineering,	187	60.9	60.9	60.9
	Architecture	25	8.1	8.1	69.1
	Economics	69	22.5	22.5	91.5
	Health	14	4.6	4.6	96.1
	Science and Literature	12	3.9	3.9	100
	Total	307	100	100	

2.3. Data Collection

During the preparatory English class, the grades that students received during the preparatory English class term including their initial placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes as well as students' class attendance hours and achievement (final grade) were gathered. The portfolio tasks included both writing activities, posters, class talks or presentations. Therefore, students had to attend the class regularly in order to get high grades. Also, students received pop-up quizzes in the class any time since they were not informed before which, in turn, encouraged the learners attend the class regularly.

2.4. Data Analysis

In this study data were analysed by SPSS 25 and both descriptive and inferential statistics were carried out. In order to provide background information about participants, descriptive analysis such as frequency and percentage was run. Also, inferential statistics such as an independent samples t-test, a one-way ANOVA, post hoc tests and regression analyses were carried out in order to show the relationship between the dependent and independent variables.

3. FINDINGS

In line with the research questions, it was scrutinized to what extent the independent variables such as gender, faculty, placement test, portfolio tasks, pop-up quizzes affect students' class attendance and language achievement in the preparatory class. The results of these tests will be illustrated below.

3.1. Does gender affect students' class attendance and language achievement?

Table 3. Effect of gender on class attendance and language achievement

	Female		Male				
	M	SD	M	SD	*t*	*p*	df
Class Attendance	98.13	87.31	125.89	105.2	-2.527 *	.01	304.427
Language Achievement	50.94	26.60	42.57	28.43	2.654*	.00	297.04

*p<.05

5

As it is seen in Table 3, an independent samples t-test was conducted in order to find out whether gender has an effect on class attendance and language achievement. The findings indicated that there is a statistically significant difference between females (*M*=98.13, *SD*=87.31) and males (*M*=125.89, *SD*=105.2) in terms of class attendance (*t*(304.427)=-2.527, *p*=.01). It can be concluded that males do not attend the classes more than females. Furthermore, the results yielded a statistically significant difference between females (*M*=50.94, *SD*=26.60) and males (*M*=42.57, *SD*=28.43) in terms of language achievement (*t*(297.04)=2.654, *p*=.00). This shows that females are more successful than males.

3.2. Does faculty affect students' class attendance and language achievement?

Table 4. Effect of faculty on class attendance and language achievement

	Engineering		Architecture		Economics		Health		Science and Literature		*F*(4,302)	*p*
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD		
Class Attendance	109.59	101.25	112.52	35.59	131.36	95.3	77.21	67.24	118.5	104.89	1.126	.34
Language Achievement	50.46	27.93	41.99	38.57	36.29	25.76	50.9	27.07	42.11	26.5	3.695*	.00

*p<.05

An one-way ANOVA was utilized to investigate the effect of faculty (engineering, architecture, economics, health, science and literature) on class attendance and language achievement. The findings showed that there is not a statistically significant difference across five groups in terms of class attendance (*F*(4,302)=1.126, *p*=.34). However, there is a statistically significant difference across the groups with regard to language achievement (*F*(4,302)=3.695, *p*=. 00). Therefore, to determine where the difference is, Scheffe post hoc test was run. According to post hoc results, only one pair, engineering (*M*=50.46, *SD*=27.93) and economics (*M*=36.29, *SD*=25.76) have significant difference at level p<.05 level. However, other groups do not differ significantly when language achievement is taken into consideration (See Table 4).

3.3. Do placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes affect students' class attendance and language achievement?

Table 5. Effect of placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes on students' class attendance

Independent Variables	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error	F Model	R Square Change	F Change
Placement Test	.188	.035	.032	96.906	11.154*	.035	11.154*
Portfolio Tasks	.877	.769	.768	47.469	1012.561*	.769	1012.561*
Pop-up Quizzes	.078	.006	.003	98.364	1.847	.006	1.847

*p<.05

Table 5 shows that a regression analysis was conducted to see the effects of placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes on students' class attendance. Placement test significantly explains 3.5% of the variation in students' class attendance (*F*(1,305)=11.154, *p*=.001). Also, portfolio tasks significantly explains 76.9% of the variation in class attendance (*F*(1,305)= 1012.561, *p*=.000), which means that portfolio tasks provide the biggest contribution to the class attendance. Finally, R Square of pop-up quizzes was found as .006, (*F*(1,305)=1.847, *p*=.175), which is not statistically significant.

Table 6. Effect of placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes on students' language achievement

Independent Variables	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Standard Error	F Model	R Square Change	F Change
Placement Test	.394	.155	.152	25.69092	55.917*	.155	55.917*
Portfolio Tasks	.831	.691	.690	15.53562	681.983*	.691	681.983*
Pop-up Quizzes	.009	.000	-.003	27.94579	.024	.000	.024

*p<.05

As it is seen in Table 6, another regression analysis was run in order to see the effects of placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes on students' language achievement. Both placement test (F(1,305)=55.917, p=.000) and portfolio tasks (F(1,305)=681.983, p=.000) significantly explain the variation in students' language achievement. Yet, portfolio tasks (69.1%) contribute to the students' language achievement more than placement test (15.5%). Last independent variable (pop-up quizzes) does not have a statistically significant effect on students' language achievement (F(1,305)=024, p=.878).

4. DISCUSSION and CONCLUSION

In this study, it was aimed to find out whether gender, faculty, placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes affected students' class attendance and language achievement within the context of elective preparatory class in a Turkish state university. In other words, it was examined to what extent the independent variables such as gender, faculty, and placement test, portfolio tasks and pop-up quizzes affected students' class attendance and language achievement in the preparatory class.

Regarding the effect of independent variable *gender* on class attendance and language achievement, it was revealed that males do not attend the classes more than females, which is confirmed by Nja, Cornelius-Ukpepi and Ihejiamaizu (2019). Furthermore, females are more successful than males, which is in line with the study of Doğan and Tuncer (2016). Another variable was faculty and it did not have a significant effect on class attendance while it affected language achievement, particularly engineering faculty has a significant impact on language achievement rather than economics faculty.

Placement test as a standardized test significantly explains class attendance and students' language achievement but the variation is slight (3.5% and 15.5% respectively). On the other hand, portfolio tasks as authentic assessment significantly explain 76.9% of the variation in class attendance. Also, they affect students' language achievement significantly (69.1%). This implies that portfolio tasks provide the biggest contribution to the class attendance and students' language achievement as students are active and engaged with the activities during the authentic assessment (Aksu-Ataç, 2012; Azim & Khan, 2012; Fox et al., 2017; Koh, 2017; Litchfield & Dempsey, 2015; Wiggins, 1990). Also, developing students' awareness, providing necessary knowledge and skills and showing their progress to attain their aims can be accomplished with portfolio assessment (Barootchi & Keshavarz, 2010). On the other hand, while students have been assessed through standardized tests, they feel more anxious and anxiety hampers their achievement or interferes with performance (Horwitz, 2001; Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986; Williams & Burden, 2000). This finding is also consistent with that of Azim and Khan (2012), who revealed that using authentic assessment make the learners active in the learning process and they improve their high order skills such as critical thinking skills (Farahian, Avarzamani & Rajabi, 2021).

Furthermore, as students are involved in the language learning process through authentic assessment, they will be more motivated to learn and attend the class. This study has the similar result to the studies of Oruç and Demirci (2020), who report that the engagement of students increases their language achievement and decrease language anxiety and Schneider (2001), who examined the effect of pair taping on the speaking in terms of motivated achievement and increased motivation to develop their language skills. They, in turn, will achieve their language goal. Also, Sokhanvar, Salehi and Sokhanvar (2021) point out that the use of authentic assessment in higher education helps to improve the learning experience of students as they learn to manage their own learning. By means of this type of assessment, they will have necessary skills for their whole life such as critical- thinking skills and problem-solving skills.

Finally, pop-up quizzes as standardized tests do not have a statistically significant effect on class attendance and students' language achievement. This finding is sharp contrast with the study of Ennis (2018), who carried out a study in an Italian university in order to reveal the effects of pop quizzes on students' attendance and participation and success in the course completion. Results showed that students attended English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP) course regularly, participated actively to get extra credit.

To sum up, portfolio tasks as authentic assessment are the best predictors for students' class attendance and language achievement, which indicates that students attend class regularly to follow the portfolio tasks in order to get higher grades. Although many countries accept the importance of changing the ways of assessment as today's education is based on "developing students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes beyond the usual, narrowly focused curriculum past", teachers at universities do not want to employ authentic assessment due to the following underlying reasons: lack of knowledge, general resistance, comfort zone, their reliance on traditional assessment (Litchfield & Dempsey, 2015, p.65). As Barootchi and Keshavarz (2010) note, portfolio assessment shows reflections not only for teachers but also for students in terms of "how well they are developing their skills and knowledge and what they need to do to develop them further" (p.286).

For further research, in-depth surveys and interviews with instructors and students might be carried out in order to validate the results. Particularly, teachers' opinions about authentic assessment should be revealed since changing assessment way means changing teaching method and learning principles, as well. That is, it is a change from teacher-centred to students-centred teaching (Litchfield & Dempsey, 2015). Moreover, the underlying reasons of decrease in class attendance or dropouts should be examined in Turkish context.

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9

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10