

## **REFLECTIVE WRITING IN AN EFL WRITING COURSE**

### **İngilizce'yi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğrenenler için Yazma Becerisi Dersinde Yansıtımlı Yazım**

**Meral ÇAPAR<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Abstract**

Lifelong learning is promoted in every field and place and one way to achieve this goal can be learning how to reflect on the learning process the learners go through and take the necessary actions to achieve their learning goals. The aim of this study was to find out to what extent EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners could reflect on their essays in an EFL writing course and whether guidance of the teacher could help them to improve their reflections. The participants of the study were required to write a pre and post reflection on their writing process while composing in English. Data were collected through questionnaires to find out how they perceived the reflection process. The reflection elements were coded according to Chirema's coding scheme (2007) on a computer program used for qualitative data analysis. The findings showed that the learners produced more qualified reflections after the training and enjoyed the process of reflecting. The findings of the study may indicate that with appropriate training, it is possible to achieve autonomy in a writing course through enhancing reflection on the learning process. Teaching learners to reflect in EFL writing course may improve their skills at pre-writing stage.

**Key words:** *Autonomy, reflection, English writing skill, process approach.*

#### **Özet**

Yaşam boyu öğrenme her alanda ve yerde teşvik edilmekte ve bu amaca ulaşmak için kullanılacak yollardan biri de öğrencilerin kendi öğrenme süreçleriyle ilgili nasıl yansıtma yapacaklarını öğrenmeleridir ve kendi öğrenme hedeflerine ulaşabilmeleri için ne yapmaları gerektiğini öğrenmelidirler. Bu çalışmanın amacı İngilizce'yi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilerin yazma becerisi dersinde kendi yazdıkları kompozisyonlara ne derece yansıtma yaptıklarını bulabilmek ve öğrenmen rehberliğinde yansıtma geliştirip geliştirmedikleri görmektir. Katılımcılardan kendi İngilizce yazma süreçleri ile ilgili ön ve son yansıtma yazmaları istenmiştir. Yansıtma süreci ile ilgili katılımcıların düşüncelerini öğrenmek üzere veriler anket aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Chirema'nın (2007) kodlama sistemi ile yansıtma öğeleri bir nitel veri analizi bilgisayar programında kodlanmıştır. Bulgular eğitimden sonra katılımcıların daha nitelikli yansıtma ürettiklerini ve bu yansıtma sürecine karşı olumlu düşündüklerini göstermiştir. Bulgular uygun bir eğitimle yazma becerisi dersinde özerklik gelişine katkıda bulunabileceğini gösterebilir. Öğrenenlere İngilizce yazma becerisi dersinde ön yazma aşamasında yansıtma öğretmenin yeteneklerine katkıda bulunabilir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Özerklik, yansıtma, İngilizce yazma becerisi, süreç yaklaşımı.*

<sup>1</sup> Okt. Dr. Anadolu Üniversitesi, e-posta: [meralceylan@anadolu.edu.tr](mailto:meralceylan@anadolu.edu.tr)

## 1. Introduction

In classrooms, having 'autonomous learners' has been one of the dreams of language teachers, as Little (1999) states learners should have independence, self-reliance, and self-confidence to fulfil the variety of social, psychological and discourse roles if they want to be efficient in communicative language use. If teachers want their students to develop autonomy, some degree of freedom in learning should be provided (Benson, 2006). Thus, it is a question of how to achieve autonomous learners in classrooms. Although autonomy is a part of human beings in the learning process, some learners reach their goals with less support of teachers while some need more. They are used to have passive roles in their learning processes (Little, 1999). In this respect it is important to guide the learners for lifelong learning, and one way to do is helping them to reflect on their own learning processes.

Curricular reforms have emphasized the importance of learner autonomy in many countries and school for almost twenty years (Yu and Wangg, 2009; Halstead and Zhu, 2009; Seeman and Taveres, 2000; Yumuk, 2002). Learner autonomy has taken place in many objectives of schools, and schools in Turkey have been working hard to implement autonomy into the education system with the projects of Ministry of Education for primary schools. However, learners do not get autonomous by just asking them being autonomous. Especially, in Turkey as Karlı (2006) states classrooms in Turkey might be usually defined as teacher-centred classes and the learners had more passive roles whereas now the whole curriculum goes under renewal. One way to achieve this is promoting self-directed learning. In self-directed learning, Holec (1988) states learners are concerned with fixing objectives, defining the contents and progression, selecting the methods and techniques, monitoring the acquisition procedure and evaluating what has been acquired.

The teacher can bring activities providing learners to take the initiative for their own learning. For instance, the learners can devise their own homework, decide what to read, reflect on and evaluate a lesson or their own performance (Dam, 2000). Little (1999) suggests three principles for success in second and foreign language learning: *learner involvement*, *learner reflection* and *target language use*. As a consequence, reflective learning helps students to gain and develop a deeper style of learning (Moon, 1999; Evans, 2007). If learners know what they know and how they learn more effectively, they will also be able to direct their own learning process (Hammond and Collins, 1999; Dafei, 2007).

Although being reflective in learning process is fundamental, most learners fail in this process in writing courses. In learning how to write, it is essential to reread the text that is produced and improve the content, organization and accuracy of the sentences of the text. The learners are expected to identify what they need to learn more. This is possible when learners can reflect on their own learning and what they produce. However, since learners have difficulty in learning how to reflect on their own learning process, it is essential for teachers to help them in this path (Little, 1999). Requiring the learners to keep learning diaries with the necessary training and asking them to reflect on the activities carried out in the classroom are suggested activities to help learners reflect effectively by Dam (2000).

Not all learners can reflect on their own learning process in the same way. Thus, three levels of reflection have been suggested by Kember, Jones, McKay, Sinclair, Tse, Wong, Wong and Yeung (1999): Non-reflectors (lack evidence of deliberate appraisal), reflectors (demonstrate insight through analysis, discrimination, and evaluation) and critical

reflectors (indicate a transformation from initial perspective). There is to identify to what extent learners can reflect on their own learning and then help them to improve themselves. The aim of this study is to find out to what extent the learners can reflect on their essays in writing course and whether guidance of the teacher can help them to improve their reflection.

### **1.1 Autonomy and Reflection**

Little (2000) states that effective learning includes the growth of autonomy in the learner in terms of both the process and the content of learning. However, stimulus, insight and guidance of a good teacher are required for most learners' growth of autonomy. The natural mode of developmental and experimental learning consists of interaction with others, and our capacity to learn on our own includes our experience of learning with and from others (Little, 2000). This leads us to one of the characteristic of autonomous foreign language learners: Being able to identify their own needs, strengths and weaknesses and set goals in line with these needs (Dam, 2000; Little, 1999; Ridley, 2000; Rivers, 2001).

Self-assessment can be defined as a process in which the learners evaluate their own performance, and it is a part of learner autonomy (Little, 2005). Self-assessment is a process which may raise the awareness of the learners related to their language learning process. O'Malley and Pierce (1996) states that self-assessment does not mean only forms and checklists. Indeed, in teaching students to evaluate their progress, the first step is to realize that students will be learning new skills. There is a need for opportunities to learn and apply these skills with feedback of the teacher for how to do self-assessment in meaningful ways that will help the learners set learning goals for themselves. Hence, with the help of self-assessment and teachers, students become more aware of their language learning process which means the start of fostering autonomy. In this sense, the current study regards reflection/monitoring in the learning process as the basic step for self-assessment.

Teaching learner strategies is a need for effective language learning process (Harris, 1997; Wenden, 1987). However, learners have various capacities for reflection and expression of their own beliefs, their attitudes, their needs and objectives when they come to the class (Harris, 1997; Kjisik and Nordlund, 2000). It is the teacher's goal to guide those learners to take the initiative for their own learning. Thomsen (2000) attempted to promote learner autonomy in her classroom. What Thomsen did was helping the learners becoming more independent by engaging them in ongoing evaluation of the learning process. Whitehead (2000) and Geddes (2000) also suggest guiding the learners for reflection on their own learning process and on their previous learning.

Furthermore, Seeman and Tavares (2000) state that the students in their school were passive receivers most of the time and students are able to learn from their own mistakes because this meant responsibility for them. In 1998, Seeman and Tavares included some activities in their classroom to promote autonomy. They asked their students to work in groups, to make presentations and evaluate the presentations. The main activity they included was group work; however, they stated that one useful activity they carried out was self-reflection. They emphasized that a diary is a vital tool in classroom and the last ten minutes of the English lessons was devoted to writing reflections and evaluations in the diary (Vickers and Morgan, 2003).

Moreover, keeping diaries is a tool which provides information on learners' progress for the teacher. In other words, requiring learners to keep diaries connects the teacher to the learners (Dam, 2000; Seeman and Tavares, 2000). Furthermore, it provides feedback for

the teacher about the successful and unsuccessful classroom practices and activities. To be brief, learning diaries are suggested tools to develop self-reflection capacity of learners (Dam, 2000; Little, 1999; Seeman and Tavares, 2000). To promote autonomy in class, Rivers (2001) conducted a study to find out to whether learners can assess their own learning process. The findings showed that students could assess their own learning accurately and tended to modify their language learning skills and learning processes.

Kjisik and Nordlund (2000) incorporated some activities in the school program to enhance learner reflection. Moreover, they suggest teaching language learning strategies by practicing and asking the students to analyse their own strategies. Another suggestion is asking the students to analyse their needs because some students do not come to class with specific or clear aims for language learning. Thus, the students were given a needs analysis questionnaire to identify why they learn English. This created the opportunity to decide on specific study plans instead of blurred objectives. As it can be seen, enhancing reflective learning is a long process and needs training for learners. In contrast to Rivers's (2001), this study ended up with suggesting training for reflection.

The departmental study of Evans (2007) focused on reflective learning. The study showed that best reflections were thoughtful and detailed, connecting and joining together experiences, building understanding and exploratory responses whereas the weakest reflections were succinct, practical, over-concerned with plain emotional responses, missing in proof of meta-reflection, and over-descriptive. Lor (1998) examined how students reflect on their learning process by keeping journals. The data analysis revealed that students focused planned events rather than unplanned learning events. In most cases learners commented on positive feelings about activities. Lor found that the diary entries were also short and little sense occurred in the continuity of the entries. Hence, Little (1999; 2007) suggests learner training for the reflection process. Whitehead (2000) adds that use of metaphors can be valuable in the reflection process. The learners choose what animal they are as learners and explain first why they have chosen that particular animal. Then all the reflections is made as an animal. The use is that by means of metaphor the learner can feel more relaxed and confident because what he learns or cannot learn is problem of this animal.

It is vital to teach learners how to cope with their own learning process and especially in teaching writing in English. They may need to develop strategies for their writing skill, and reflecting on their own texts can aid the learner how to plan and revise the text next time especially for low-achieving students teaching writing needs more effort (2012). Thus, the aim of this study was to find out to what extent the learners can reflect on their essays in writing course and whether guidance of the teacher can help them to improve their reflections. In the light of this aim, the research questions presented below were produced:

- (1) To what extent can the EFL learners reflect on an essay they write?
- (2) Does providing training on reflective learning create a difference on learners' reflections on an essay they wrote?
- (3) What are the EFL students' perceptions on writing reflection on essays?

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants

30 students from the School of Foreign languages at a public university in Turkey participated in the study. However, towards the end of the study, 12 students were left in the classroom because of various reasons such as quitting the school. The language proficiency level of the participants was A2. A2 level learners were preferred in the study because it was observed that they had difficulties in writing an essay and revising it in terms of content, organization and mechanics. Thus, it was thought that providing these students guidance on how to reflect on their essays may be helpful for their future writing abilities. Before the students are grouped according to their levels at this school, they take a placement test at the beginning of the fall term, and according to this test, the proficiency level of the participants was determined as A2. Their ages ranged from 17 to 24 ( $M=20.5$ ). The native language of all participants was Turkish. The participants were from two intact writing classes. The sample was determined on voluntarily basis, so convenience sampling was applied because the participants were provided with short training on reflective learning, and this was possible only after school time because of ethical reasons.

### 2.2. The Conceptual Framework

The reflective process which was described by Boud, Keogh, and Walker and by Mezirow (1990) was used in this study. These models were used in the study by Wong, Loke, Wong, Tse, Kan, Kember (1995), by Chirema (2007) and by Thorpe (2004) successfully and they offered clear description of the reflection process. Although these studies focused on nurses, it was thought that the descriptions are general and could be applied to EFL learners. Mezirow (1990) groups reflectors as *non-reflectors*, *reflectors*, and *critical reflectors*. These concepts will be explained under the data coding. Boud et al. (1985) model emphasized that an individual faces an experience, and s/he reacts to it. The reflective process is initiated when they go back to the experience; consider what happened and redo it. Re-evaluation consists of four elements: association, integration, validation and appropriation. The outcome of reflection can be described as the development of new perspectives or changed behaviour. The process may not be linear according to Boud et al. (1985); in other words, these elements are independent from each other. Thus, there were some omission of some stages during this process.

### 2.3. Data Collection

The data were collected through participants' written reflections and open-ended questionnaire on their opinions of reflecting process on essays. The participants were asked to write an essay and then to reflect on their writing process. Then they were provided some guidance on how to reflect on their writing process by the help of the researcher. A short training was provided for the participants. The researcher first explained what reflection was and she provided some questions for this process such as:

- (1) What did I do before the writing my essay? (planning, reading...)
- (2) At the planning stage what did I have difficulty with?
- (3) At the planning stage what was easy for me?
- (4) While writing my essay, did I have any difficulty? At which part?
- (5) While writing my essay, which part did I write the best?
- (6) When I finished my essay I felt....(adjective) because.....
- (7) Did I edit my text? How?

- (8) The best part of my essay is.....
- (9) The worst part of my essay is.....
- (10)What do I need to study to improve my writing?

Then, there was a group discussion on what hinders them in writing good essays to raise awareness. The participants were asked also to fill in a reflection chart after each writing lesson (see Figure 1).

About my learning	About lessons
I have learned...	I like best...
I can...	The most interesting thing is...
I am good at...	I don't like
I haven't managed...	The most boring thing is...
I don't understand...	
I have difficulty in...	

Figure 1: Reflection Sample

As the last stage, the researcher wrote an essay too and then she reflected on it loudly to model the students. Then participants were asked to write another essay and reflect on it; however, these reflections were considered as practice, so they were not included in the data. Finally, the participants were asked to write and reflect on what they wrote and the data for the study was collected at this stage.

The open-ended questionnaire included two main questions related to the guidance provided. The participants were asked to write their feelings about the process they went through, whether they found it beneficial or not. The aim of the questionnaire was to obtain participants' views on reflection and their experience.

**2.4. Data Analysis**

The written reflections were analysed to determine the level of reflection. Initially, the level the written reflections was examined according to the elements of reflection. Then the participants were placed into one of three categories of non-reflectors, reflectors and critical reflectors (Mezirow; 1990). *Non-reflectors* show no evidence of any of the reflective elements; *Reflectors* showed one or more of the three levels, that is, attending to feelings, association and integration; *Critical Reflectors* reflect at the level of validation, appropriation and outcome of reflection. All data were analysed and coded on qualitative analysis program NVivo10. The coding scheme of Chirema (2007) was used in this study (see Appendix A).

Reliability of coding for the written reflections and the open-ended questionnaire was established with a second coder. The second coder was informed on the elements of reflection and then 25% of the whole data were coded by the second coder and the reliability Kappa coefficient mean was calculated as 0.90. The data from the open-ended questionnaire will be analysed through a systematic approach coding the themes and issues raised in the data (Creswell, 2005). Then the first and second reflections of the participants were compared to find out whether the guidance was beneficial for the participants in terms of improving the elements of reflection process.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 To what extent can the EFL learners reflect on an essay they write?

12 EFL students were involved in the study. Both the first and the last reflections the students wrote were analysed to find out to what extent the students were reflective on their essays. The reflections were first coded with the coding scheme adapted from Boud, Keogh and Walker (1985). Since there were some elements not fitting this coding scheme, the emerging themes were added to the scheme. Basically one element was added: stating negative feelings. When the reflections were analysed, 60 reflective elements were coded on the first reflections of all students before the training. Illustrative texts are presented below for each category (Table 1).

Table 1: Illustrative texts from the data

<b>Attending to feelings</b>	
<b>a. Positive feelings</b>	<i>When I finished my essay I felt happy because I think I supported my ideas well.</i>
<b>b. Negative feelings</b>	<i>I felt awful while writing the introductory paragraph.</i>
<b>Association</b>	<i>I tried to use the vocabulary I learnt from my reading course.</i>
<b>Integration</b>	<i>I understood that outlining helps a lot while writing.</i>
<b>Validation</b>	-----
<b>Appropriation</b>	<i>I believe that I can write more fluently when I put my ideas from the outline to the correct places in my essay.</i>
<b>Outcome of reflection</b>	<i>I have to study more grammar and vocabulary.</i>

The participants showed different elements on their reflections. Each element was counted in number for each category with the second coder. The results are presented in Table 2. The students were given pseudonyms.

Table 2: Elements on the First Reflection

Number of Elements on the 1 <sup>st</sup> Reflections								
Feelings								
	P	N	Association	Integration	Validation	Appropriation	Outcome	Total
Agah	2	--	3	-----	-----	-----	-----	5
Nermin	1	1	3	-----	-----	-----	-----	3
Emel	2	--	2	-----	-----	1	1	6
Mehmet	--	--	3	-----	-----	-----	-----	3
Göker	--	2	2	1	-----	-----	-----	5
Ahmet	2	--	2	-----	-----	-----	1	4
Uğur	2	--	3	-----	-----	-----	1	5
Ceyda	--	3	1	-----	-----	-----	-----	4
Emre*	1	1	3	-----	-----	-----	2	5
Rıfat	3	--	2	-----	-----	-----	1	5
Demet	--	2	1	-----	-----	-----	1	3
Orhan	2	1	1	-----	-----	-----	1	4

**P:** Positive feelings; **N:** Negative Feelings; **\***: Critical Reflector

As it can be seen from Table 2, most of the reflective elements were coded at three categories: attending feelings, association and outcome on first reflections. None of the students showed any elements of validation on the first reflections. Only one student showed elements of appropriation and another student showed one element of integration.

According to these elements, it was identified whether the students could be classified as *non-reflectors*, *reflectors* or *critical reflectors* (Mezirow; 1990). There were not any *non-reflectors* among the participants. Since they usually showed elements from the first two categories, before the training, 11 participants were grouped as reflectors and only one student (Emre) could be classified as critical reflector because he showed two elements of *outcome of reflection* on his first reflection.

### 3.2 Does providing training on reflective learning create a difference on learners' reflection on an essay they wrote?

After the training, the participants were asked to write an essay and reflect on their writing. These reflections were analysed with the same coding scheme and classification to find out whether the training increased the number of elements of reflection. When the second reflections were analysed, it was found that the number of elements increased from 60 to 100 on the second reflections of the participants. Table 3 shows the results of the second reflection analysis.

Table 3: Elements on the Second Reflection

Number of Elements on the 2 <sup>nd</sup> Reflections								
Feelings								
	P	N	Association	Integration	Validation	Appropriation	Outcome	Total
Agah	1	-	4	1	-----	1	-----	7
Nermin	1	1	1	2	-----	-----	1	5
Emel*	5	--	6	-----	-----	3	1	15
Mehmet	4	--	1	-----	-----	-----	1	6
Göker	3	--	2	4	-----	-----	1	10
Ahmet	4	2	2	-----	-----	1	-----	9
Uğur	3	--	5	-----	-----	-----	-----	8
Ceyda	--	2	1	1	-----	-----	1	5
Emre*	1	--	5	-----	-----	2	2	10
Rıfat	2	1	2	1	-----	-----	-----	6
Demet	4	--	4	2	-----	-----	1	11
Orhan	3	1	2	-----	-----	-----	1	7

P: Positive feelings; N: Negative Feelings; \*: Critical Reflector

Considering the number of elements on the second reflections, the participants can be grouped as reflectors and critical reflectors. In their second reflection, two students were classified as critical reflectors: Emel and Emre; 10 students remained in the category of reflectors; whereas in their first reflections only one student was a critical reflector. For the second reflections, although it seems that the training increased the number of some reflection elements, not all students showed the same performance. Table 4 compares two reflections of the students.

Table 4: *Comparison of First and Second Reflections*

	Feelings 1		Feelings 2		Asso		Int.		Val.		App .		App .		Tot.	
	P	N	P	N	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd	1st	2nd
	Agah	2	--	1	-	3	4	--	1	--	--	--	1	--	--	5
Nermin	1	1	1	1	3	1	--	2	--	--	--	--	--	1	3	5
Emel	2	--	5	--	2	6	--	--	--	--	1	3	1	1	6	15*
Mehmet	--	--	4	--	3	1	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	3	6
Göker	--	2	3	--	2	2	1	4	--	--	--	--	--	1	5	10*
Ahmet	2	--	4	2	2	2	--	--	--	--	--	1	1	--	4	9
Uğur	2	--	3	--	3	5	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	--	5	8
Ceyda	--	3	--	2	1	1	--	1	--	--	--	--	--	1	4	5
Emre*	1	1	1	--	3	5	--	--	--	--	--	2	2	2	5	10*
Rıfat	3	--	2	1	2	2	--	1	--	--	--	--	1	--	5	6
Demet	--	2	4	--	1	4	--	2	--	--	--	--	1	1	3	11*
Orhan	2	1	3	1	1	2	--	--	--	--	--	--	1	1	4	7

Table 4 shows that the number of elements of reflective learning found in students' reflections increased after the training. Although 10 students did not show any change in the categories after the training, the number and variety in the categories showed differences. The total number of elements increased at Emel's, Göker's, Emre's and Orhan's reflections. They almost doubled the number of the elements of reflection.

In terms of including feelings, there were both negative and positive feelings stated in the first reflections whereas in the second reflections, most students mentioned more about

the positive feelings they experienced while writing an essay. Except Ceyda, all students included more positive feelings in their second reflections. However, she mentioned less of her negative feelings in her reflection.

Association is linking prior knowledge or feelings with new experience. This element did not change in number much. Four students had the same number of this element in their reflections: Göker, Ahmet, Ceyda and Rifat. 8 students increased the number of this element in their second reflections.

Most difference between the first and second reflections is seen at the element of integration and appropriation. While only one student (Göker) included integration in his first reflection, 6 students showed in their second reflections. Since the first three stages can be seen in the reflections of the students, 6 students can be classified as complete *reflectors*. Thus, they are moving towards being critical reflectors. Furthermore, one student showed elements of appropriation in (Emel) first reflection; whereas four students (including Emel) showed it in their second reflections. In terms of *validation*, none of the students showed any elements related to this category in their reflections.

Finally, the last element of reflection is the *outcome of reflection*. This category includes action. At every stage the learner should plan what to do next. Before the training, 7 students explicitly stated what they needed to learn and how they plan to learn. After the training, 8 students included this element. What is interesting here is that although three students (Ahmet, Uğur, and Rifat) included the elements of *outcome of reflection* in their first reflections, they did not include it after training. Four students (Emel, Emre, Demet, and Orhan) included one element of *outcome of reflection* in their first reflections and this did not change after training. In other words, the training did not increase the number of elements of *outcome of reflection* in these students' reflections. Finally, four students (Nermin, Mehmet, Göker, Ceyda) did not state any plan for their future learning in their first reflections, but they included it after training. Since the last two categories, besides the first three categories, were found at Emel's and Emre's second reflections, they can be classified as critical reflections.

To conclude, after the training there were an increase in number of elements of positive feelings, association, integration, appropriation, and outcome of reflection categories. The number of critical reflectors increased to 2 from 1, but within the categories, the number of elements in students' reflections showed a raise after the training.

### **3.3 What are the EFL students' perceptions on writing reflection on essays?**

The students were asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire after the training they received. They were basically asked whether they found the training on reflection beneficial and in what aspects. All of the students stated that they found it beneficial. They believed that the training helped them to realize their mistakes, how to think in detail and improve their writing ability.

The students were asked what they have learnt during the reflection process and four students stated that they learnt how to think in more detail on the topic given, two of them stated they learnt how to notice their mistakes and two students thought that they learnt how to plan their text before writing. One student thought that it was spending time productively. Finally one student did not answer this question.

Another question was related whether they thought that there was difference between their first and second reflections. 11 students stated that they showed improvement in

reflecting on their own essay writing process and that their reflections improved. Only one student thought there was a little improvement in her reflection.

The questionnaire included also an item on the most useful side of reflecting on writing. All students believed that reflecting on the essay helped them to raise their awareness on the essay writing process. However, when they were asked the negative side of the reflection process, 4 students stated that it took a lot of time to write their reflections and 8 students thought there was not any negative side of this process.

The students were asked whether reflection on essay writing should be taught in their schools, namely whether they recommend it to their friends. Ten students stated that it should be taught because it helped them to understand the writing process better; whereas, 2 students stated it should not be taught because of personal differences and learning styles.

On the whole, the students thought that learning how to reflect on their essay writing process helped them learn the process better and produce better texts.

#### **4. Discussion and Conclusion**

The study was an attempt to find out to what extent EFL learners can reflect on their essay writing process and whether providing guidance helps them improving their reflections on their essays. The data indicated that considering the analysis of the reflections, students showed reflectivity at the level of attending to feelings and association. They included less elements of integration in their reflections. These levels can be seen as the first stage of reflectivity. Only one student demonstrated elements of *appropriation* and *outcome of reflection* before the training. This finding is in line with the findings of Chirema's (2007) study. Although this study was conducted with medical students, similar findings were demonstrated in that study. After the training, there was little increase in the elements of reflection. This may suggest that students need guidance to reflect on their learning process. They need more practice and modelling performed by their teachers. However, the slight increase in the number of reflective elements can be promising because perhaps after a longer period of training, it may be possible to have more reflective learners in class. It can be concluded that the training and modelling affected the learners' performance on the reflecting process.

The training provided for the learners increased the number of the critical reflectors from one to two. Ten students showed no difference in their second reflections although the reflection elements increased. This may be interpreted as success because the learners may have moved linearly within the "reflector" level. This may suggest that the training provided can be modified according to the feedback of the learners and the treatment can be arranged for a longer time period. With such amendments, it may be possible to achieve a high number of critical reflectors. Another reason for the slight increase of the number of critical reflectors may be personal differences in learning. Not all learners use the same strategy for their learning process. Individual differences may require learners to find their own way of learning and improving. The role of the teacher here is to guide these learners to find out what kind of learners they are.

Language learners usually experience difficulty in writing and more specifically, learners in this study show a lot of effort in writing their texts; however, they skip the planning and revision stages of the writing process. They need to spend more time on these stages. By using the reflection method in the writing course, it was aimed to establish a small part of self-directed learning on the part of the learners and help them be aware of the

writing process. The findings of the study showed that there was an increase in the number of integration in the reflections which may show that the training was partly successful in enhancing self-directed learning in the writing process. Integration was less in the first reflections so it may be stated that the learners were moving from low level of reflection to a higher level (Wong et al., 1995).

It was observed that the positive feelings stated in the reflections displayed an increase. This finding is in line with Lor's (1998). This increase in positive feelings may be because the learners found a way to comprehend the writing process and to improve their writing. Moreover, since the training was completed after official class hour, the learners may have thought that they showed extra effort for their own learning and this may have motivated them.

The learners in the study usually stated positive feelings towards the reflection and writing process after the training. This may show that these learners feel ready to take the initiative for their own learning and need a little bit freedom in their learning process, and when they were introduced with the reflection process, they displayed positive feelings. Developing positive feelings in learning is vital because negative feelings can create barriers for learning (Chirema; 2007); therefore, the role of the teacher here is very significant when the learners show negative feelings. The teacher should take necessary actions to remove those feelings and guide the students to develop more positive feelings.

Since the term *autonomy* has been used widely in Turkish higher education system in recent years, most of the students may not feel confident by taking responsibility for their own learning and assess their performance on language learning. This had been always the role of the teacher in Turkey and now learners may experience difficulty in adapting for the new learner type. This is also supported with the findings of this study. They found reflecting useful but time consuming. Although the learners thought reflection had positive effect on them, few of the learners preferred more time saving activities in learning English, too. In the study of Rivers (2001), Kjisik and Nordlund (2000), self-assessment and reflection were emphasized and their findings showed that their students were ready to take such a step, and the findings of this study displayed that majority of the learners thought that reflecting should be taught at schools although it takes too much time. This might be interpreted as, with correct instructions, it is possible to guide the learners to reflect on their own English essay writing process. Turkish EFL learners desire autonomy but the dense syllabus and proficiency exam at the end of the term prevent to spend fruitful time on this process. This is also the case in the study of Halstead and Zhu (2009) where the university entrance exam in China prevents fostering autonomy.

In terms of *validation*, none of the students showed any elements related to this category in their reflections. This may show that the learners needed more time to internalize the reflection process. Since as Yumuk (2002) stated the concept autonomy has less focus in the curriculum of the schools in Turkey before the learners attend the university. At schools, the teacher is the authority and decides on what to learn and how to learn. This is also the case in Chinese EFL context where the teacher is the authority; classrooms are text-book focused, and teaching is exam oriented (Yu and Wang, 2009). Perhaps, this is the educational tradition of Asian countries and that may be the cause of less number of autonomous learners; whereas in European countries, Rivers (2001), Kjisik and Nordlund (2000) achieve autonomy easier in their studies. Most probably, this study was the first time the learners in this Turkish university were introduced with reflecting on their own learning and more specifically on essay writing process.

Another point that should be focused is the coding scheme of Chirema (2007). Chirema adapted this scheme from Boud et al. (1985) and used it for a study conducted for nurses. The current study showed that this scheme can also be used for language learners' reflections and that this scheme is not specific to medical context. However, since the sample size was not large in this study, with more data which will be analysed with this scheme can provide more insights on the use of this scheme in language learning process.

To sum up, learning how to reflect on learning process is important especially for language learners because it may motivate the learner and show how to achieve a lifelong learning process.

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**Appendix A**

Coding Scheme of Reflective process derived from Boud et al. Model (1985)

<b>Elements of reflective process</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
Attending to feelings	Utilizing positive feelings. Removing obstructing feelings.	About the experience. Remove impediments related to experience.
Association	Linking of prior knowledge, feelings or attitudes with new knowledge, feeling and attitude.	Relating the old and the new making way for the new.
Integration	Seeking the nature of relationships of prior knowledge, feelings or attitudes with new knowledge, feeling and attitude. Arriving at insights.	Relating the old and the new synthesis emerging originally.
Validation	Testing for internal consistency between new appreciations and prior knowledge or beliefs.	
Appropriation	Making knowledge, one's own new knowledge, feelings or attitude entering into own sense of identity new knowledge, feelings or attitudes becoming a significant force in own life.	
Outcome of reflection	Transformation in perspectives change in behavior readiness for application commitment to action.	

From Chirema (2007; 201)