



**PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF THE PREPARATORY
CLASS STUDENTS TOWARDS THE WRITING COURSE AND
ATTITUDE-SUCCESS RELATIONSHIP IN WRITING IN THE
SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT PAMUKKALE
UNIVERSITY**

Ali ERARSLAN

June 2011

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UNIVERSITY**

**Pamukkale University
The Institute of Social Sciences
Master of Arts Thesis
English Language Teaching Department**

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June 2011

DENİZLİ

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ ONAY FORMU

İngiliz Dili Eğitimi Anabilim Dalı öğrencisi Ali ERARSLAN tarafından Yrd. Doç. Dr. Turan PAKER yönetiminde hazırlanan "Perceptions and Attitudes of Preparatory Class Students towards the Writing Course and Attitude-Success Relationship in Writing at the School of Foreign Languages at Pamukkale University" başlıklı tez aşağıdaki jüri üyeleri tarafından 28/06/2011 tarihinde yapılan tez savunma sınavında başarılı bulunmuş ve Yüksek Lisans Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.



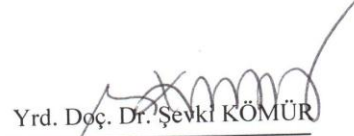
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Pamukkale Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Yönetim Kurulu'nun
17/08/2011 tarih ve ...13/06. sayılı kararıyla onaylanmıştır.



Doç. Dr. Bilal SÖĞÜT
Müdür

Bu tezin tasarımı, hazırlanması, yürütülmesi, araştırılmalarının yapılması ve bulgularının analizlerinde bilimsel etiğe ve akademik kurallara özenle riayet edildiğini; bu çalışmanın doğrudan birincil ürünü olmayan bulguların, verilerin ve materyallerin bilimsel etiğe uygun olarak kaynak gösterildiğini ve alıntı yapılan çalışmalara atfedildiğini beyan ederim.

İmza : 
Öğrenci Adı Soyadı : Ali ERARSLAN

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a great pleasure to thank many people who made this thesis possible. First of all, it is difficult to overstate my gratitude to my thesis supervisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Turan PAKER for his invaluable guidance, patience and support throughout this study. Without his assistance, this thesis would never have been completed.

I also thank the members of the MA TEFL program at Pamukkale University, Asst. Prof. Dr. Recep Şahin ARSLAN, Asst. Prof. Dr. Selami OK and Asst. Prof. Dr. Demet YAYLI for helping me to develop my background in language teaching and research, and for their suggestions on my study. Their involvement in this study has nourished my academic maturity, and all their efforts contributed to my determination to successfully complete this thesis.

I also thank Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ramazan BAŞTÜRK for his invaluable guidance and assistance in carrying out our statistical procedures.

I am also indebted to my colleagues, Devrim Höl, Tamer Sarı, Şefiye Tuzcu, Kısmet Öğmen, Hale Yayla and Eda Aslan at School of Foreign Languages, Pamukkale University who shared their invaluable time and experience during my study. I also owe great many thanks to my dear friend, colleague, İbrahim Er for his invaluable support and his wife Sema Er for her great hospitality in their house.

Great many thanks to PAU Research Projects Office (BAP) and to the staff as they have supported my thesis financially and provided assistance for various occasions.

I would like to thank my parents, my brother, my father-in-law and my mother-in-law for supporting and encouraging me to pursue this degree and for providing a loving environment for me.

My greatest thanks to my beloved wife, Ayşegül Erarslan, who was always there cheering me up and stood by me through the good and bad times. Additionally, my special thanks to the most valuable person in my life, my daughter Sena Erarslan.

ÖZET

PAMUKKALE ÜNİVERSİTESİ YABANCI DİLLER YÜKSEKOKULU HAZIRLIK SINIFI ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN YAZMA DERSİNE KARŞI ALGI VE TUTUMLARI VE YAZMA DERSİNDEKİ TUTUM-BAŞARI İLİŞKİSİNİN İNCELENMESİ

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Yüksek Lisans Tezi, İngiliz Dili Eğitimi ABD
Tez Yöneticisi: Yard. Doç. Dr. Turan PAKER

Haziran 2011,118 Sayfa

Bu çalışmanın amacı Pamukkale Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulunda 2009-2010 Akademik Yılında Hazırlık sınıfı öğrencilerinin yazma dersine yönelik tutum ve algılarını belirlemek, yazma dersi almadan önceki tutumları ile dersi aldıktan sonraki tutumlarını karşılaştırmak ve son olarak öğrencilerin yazma dersine karşı tutumları ile başarı arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemektir. Çalışmanın evrenini 2009-2010 Akademik Yılında Hazırlık sınıflarında öğrenim görmekte olan Mühendislik, Tıp, İktisadi ve İdari Bilimler Fakültesi gibi farklı fakültelerden 1141 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Çalışmanın örneklemini ise Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulunda orta-alt, orta ve orta-üst düzey olmak üzere 3 düzey grubunda okuyan 783 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Veriler yazma dersini almaya başlamadan önce ve aldıktan sonra öğrencilere uygulanan anketler yoluyla elde edilmiştir. Bu ankette, öğrencilerden yazma dersine yönelik algı ve tutumlarını ders öncesi ve ders sonrası olmak üzere değerlendirmeleri istenmiştir. Buna ek olarak, öğrencilerin genel tutum ortalamaları ile yılsonu yeterlilik sınavındaki yazma bölümünden aldıkları puanlar arasındaki bağıntı incelenmiştir. Veriler betimsel şekilde analiz edilmiştir. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre, ön test uygulamasında, öğrencilerin büyük bir çoğunluğunun yazma dersini almadan önce derse karşı olumlu bir tutuma sahip olduğu görülmüştür. Son test uygulama sonuçları da öğrencilerin dersi aldıktan sonraki tutumlarının yine olumlu olduğunu ancak ön test tutumlarına ile kıyaslandığında dersi aldıktan sonraki tutumlarında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı olmayan bir düşüş gösterdiklerini ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca; öğrencilerin yazma dersine yönelik tutumları ile başarıları incelendiğinde, tutumun başarı üzerinde olumlu bir etkisi olduğu sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yazma Becerisi, Yazma dersine yönelik algı, Yazma dersine yönelik tutum, Hazırlık sınıfı

ABSTRACT

PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF THE PREPARATORY CLASS STUDENTS TOWARDS THE WRITING COURSE AND ATTITUDE-SUCCESS RELATIONSHIP IN WRITING IN THE SCHOOL OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES AT PAMUKKALE UNIVERSITY

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M.A. Thesis in ELT
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June 2011, 118 Pages

This study aims to explore the attitudes and perceptions of the students towards the writing course at Pamukkale University, School of Foreign Languages, to compare the students' attitude scores before and after they take the writing course, and finally to investigate the relationship between students' attitudes and their overall proficiency in writing. The target population of the study is the students from different faculties such as Engineering, Medicine, and Business Administration and Economics who have English preparatory education in the School of Foreign Languages at Pamukkale University in 2009-2010 academic year. The participants are 783 students in the pre-intermediate, intermediate and upper-intermediate level. The data were collected via questionnaires delivered to the students before and after they took the writing course. The students were asked to assess their perceptions and attitudes towards the writing course as pre- and post-tests. In addition, the relationship between students' average attitude scores and their overall writing proficiency based on the writing results in the proficiency exam was assessed. The data were analyzed descriptively. In the pre-test, it was found that most of the students had positive attitudes towards writing. The post-test results revealed that the students still had positive attitudes towards the course, however when compared to pre-test results, it is seen that there was a slight decrease in their attitudes towards writing and this decrease in the post test is not statistically significant. Finally, when the relationship between students' average attitude scores and their overall writing proficiency is assessed, we can conclude that the attitude has a positive effect on students' proficiency in writing.

Key Words: Writing skill, Attitudes towards writing, Perceptions towards writing, Preparatory class

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CW: Controlled Writing
EFL: English as a Foreign Language
ESL: English as a Second Language
ELT: English Language Teaching
FW: Free Writing
PW: Process Writing
L1: First Language
L2: Second Language
NS: Native Speaker
NNS: Non-Native Speaker
TL: Target Language

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, information about background of the study, statement of the problem, significance of the study, research questions, assumptions and limitations of the study will be discussed.

1.2. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Hyland (2003) states that writing is one the most important skills people who are learning a second language need to develop. “The ability to write effectively is becoming increasingly important in our global community, and instruction in writing is thus assuming an increasing role in both second- and foreign- language education” (Weigle, 2002:1). According to Harmer (2004), “being able to write is a vital skill for speakers of a foreign language as much as for everyone using their own first language” (p.2). L2 writing is undeniably a complex process that involves both the cognitive processes of second language acquisition, as well as the genres, purposes, and values of the targeted L2 discourse community (Polio and Williams, 2009). It stimulates thinking, compels students to concentrate and organize their ideas, and cultivates their ability to summarize, analyze, and criticize (Rao, 2007, Ur, 1996). Ur (1996) defines writing as “a complex and a difficult task”. It necessitates a good planning, content organization, use of appropriate vocabulary, and practice. According to Hughey, Wormouth, Hartfield and Jacobs (1983), writing is a highly complex pattern, and it requires many levels of thinking such as analysis and synthesis.

The complexities associated with writing come from two major factors: the nature of writing itself and the nature of classrooms as educational settings (Dyson and Freedman, 2003). Many scholars argue that writing skill is different from the other

skills in that although listening and speaking are acquired, writing is learned.

In most of the universities in Turkey, students need to have English education for a year in preparatory classes before they start taking courses in their own departments if their medium of instruction is in English completely or partly. In these classes, based on four skills, they need to learn English for communicative purposes in order to be successful in academic context. As stated above, among other skills such as listening, speaking and reading, we can generalize from the experience to say that many EFL learners find writing in L2 a painful process (Bayram, 2006), and teachers face many challenges when preparing students to express their ideas and thoughts effectively in written form. Learners' ability to express their ideas in written format in L2 using a planned framework takes time; thus, learners may have some negative attitudes towards this course. As the purpose of writing is still seen as forming grammatically correct sentences in many cases, the students have also been taught with such an understanding in Turkey during their primary and secondary education, and in some cases even in university context (Nohl and Sayılan, 2004). On the other hand, when they have a foreign language education based on using skills communicatively, they get frustrated because of their past experiences. Thus, writing course is regarded as one of the most challenging and stressful part of their foreign language learning at preparatory classes. Such a case also causes changes in their attitudes and perceptions, and depending on their belief, they form different habits towards this course.

1.3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Writing plays an important role in language learning and the objective of teaching second language writing in universities is to develop the writing skill in a communicative and academic way. In addition, writing in language teaching has been gaining importance recently, and in various curricula, with the aim of improving students' productive skills communicatively, writing in many institutions in Turkey has taken place for the purpose of communicative language teaching. Besides, there have also been some developments in terms of testing, materials and teaching materials for the writing course. When these developments in writing are considered, being informed

about what the students' attitudes toward writing is crucial.

Writing is a complex integration of linguistic resources and rhetorical objectives. The conceptual message and rhetorical objectives appeal to linguistic knowledge at the same time to express the ideas correctly and appropriately, which may lead to cognitive overload. Therefore, writing in one's own mother tongue either in Turkish or in English is demanding (Akpınar, 2007).

For many years in Turkey, teaching writing in primary, secondary and higher education institutions has been merely viewed as summarizing a text or a book given as a homework, and as writing a composition about a proverb in which there is an introduction paragraph with an introduction sentence, an explanation part in which there are at least two or three examples about the given topic and a conclusion paragraph including a summarizing sentence (Kuvanç, 2008).

Even if we consider that students achieved proficiency in L1 writing, writing in a foreign language is still demanding because it requires learners to have a good planning, content knowledge, context knowledge, language system knowledge and writing process knowledge (Tribble, 1996). In spite of the nature of complexity in writing in L2, linguistic, cognitive and affective factors also effect students overall success not only in writing but also in other language skills. Since the L2 student-writers have to survive in academic settings, they face many problems both affectively and cognitively (Akpınar, 2007). According to Raimes (1984), if there is a demanding situation in writing, they have the potential to experience problems. When they encounter any situation demanding writing, they may experience problems such as writing apprehension. Because of traditional and very structural teaching style in writing in their native language, students have negative feelings towards writing, and in academic context; academic staff who teach writing face some unwilling students who have prejudice against writing course. However, such negative affective factors prevent students' active participation in writing activities, give the feeling of failure, and inhibit interaction in class between teacher and students.

Malicka (1996) mentions that negative attitudes cause fear of failure, low self-esteem, resentment and resistance, and the lack of coping strategies. His study indicates

that the type of interaction within the class affects students' perceptions of and feelings about writing and may shape their development as writers. The study points to the need to include both interaction and affect in the L2 writing theory, research, and teaching practice. In writing classes, types of activities which include a lot of focus on grammar instead of meaning, grading written products on the basis of grammatical correctness and the tasks used in class which are mostly grammar-based and error-oriented also increase the fear of failure on the part of the students. As a result, students who have negative feelings towards writing have to deal with the task of overcoming their fears of making grammatical errors in order not to look unsuccessful among their class mates if the instruction is given in a traditional way with a heavy focus on grammatical correctness rather than expressing ideas clearly in a communicative way.

1.4. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Various studies have proved the significance of attitudinal factors in language learning. Therefore, the main concern of this study is the preparatory students' attitudes towards writing course at Pamukkale University. In academic setting, a major focus of many teachers is on preparing learners to cope with the language requirements, and in particular, the writing requirements of university courses (Bruce, 2008). The increase in writing activities has presented teachers with the challenge of determining their students' attitudes towards writing because of the link between motivation and literacy learning (Kear, Coffman, McKenna and Ambrosio, 2000). As they suggest, if we are more knowledgeable about our students' attitudes toward writing, then our writing can potentially benefit from this new information. According to Klein (1986), to master language skills, adults should be suitably motivated. This takes us to a key factor which influences the success of students in second language learning that is the subject area of our study – students' attitudes towards writing in preparatory classes at Pamukkale University.

In language learning environment students' attitudes influence their learning in two major ways. The first one includes exposition to large amounts of input necessary for language acquisition, and the second one, on the other hand, is related to being open

to the language (Krashen, 1988:21). As for writing skill, we can adopt this view of Krashen as a key factor as the former enables students to feel ready to benefit from the course in utmost level without having barriers in their minds about it, and the latter makes them feel free to actively participate in the course. Thus, being informed about the attitudes of students toward writing course may help writing instructors get an insight into how to make the students more productive and successful in their writing course considering the appropriate teaching approaches, methods and techniques and also classroom activities.

For this purpose, in our study, we attempted to find out the attitudes of our students towards the writing skill in the context of English preparatory program. The study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions and attitudes of the students towards the writing course before they take it?
2. What are the perceptions and attitudes of the students towards the writing course after they take it?
3. To what extent do the perceptions and attitudes of the students change towards the writing course when they take the writing course?
4. What are the perceptions of male and female students towards writing course?
5. To what extent do the perceptions and attitudes of the students towards the writing course change according to students' level of English?
6. To what extent do the perceptions and attitudes of the students towards the writing course change according to students' department at university?
7. Do the perceptions and attitudes of students towards the writing course affect their success in writing?

1.5. ASSUMPTIONS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

We assume that:

- preparatory class students are appropriate for this study since they study writing skill in their program,
- the tool has been reviewed and approved by the experts, thus, we assume that it has content validity,
- the data gathered in the study reflect the reality regarding the topic,
- all the participants have been exposed to the same syllabus and the same materials,
- all teachers teach writing skill and use the materials by using process approach,
- all the participants have been placed appropriately in the right level according to the placement test results administered at the beginning of the 2009-2010 academic year,
- since all the exams (placement, achievement and proficiency and quizzes) are prepared and administered by a testing committee independently, the grades of the students reflect their true achievement scores.

The participants in the study have filled out the questionnaires by their own will and they reflect their true attitudes by choosing the right slot in the questionnaires since they are not asked to write their names on the questionnaires.

This study is limited to:

- the students who attend School of Foreign Languages, Pamukkale University, in 2009-2010 academic year.
- the attitudes and perceptions of the participants.
- the sources reached.
- the generalizations made are limited to the reflection of the participants in the study.

1.6. OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Attitude: “An attitude is an idea charged with emotion which proposes a class of actions to a particular class of social situations” (Triandis, 1971:2).

Attitudes towards writing: The feelings of the students toward the writing skill taught in the School of Foreign Languages.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL): This term refers to “English taught only as a foreign language, not as a means of communication in a society” (Kocaman and Osam, 2000:125).

Second Language Acquisition: “The way in which people learn a language other than their mother tongue, inside or outside of a classroom” (Ellis, 2003:3).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, some important issues about writing, the importance of writing in second language learning, key features of writing, approaches to writing skill, teaching writing and assessing writing will be reviewed.

2.2. DEFINITION OF WRITING

Writing is one of the most challenging language skills for students to perform. “Many students struggle with writing and they often find it hard to write at all, even about topics that they know well, such as their home life, their children, or their job” (Schellekens, 2007:103) . In order to understand the reason why writing is considered as demanding, the nature of writing should be stated clearly.

The word ‘writing’ may have different aspects such as orthography, written discourse, the act of writing, or literature (Silva and Matsuda, 2002). According to Hughey et al. (1983) writing is quite complex and it requires many levels of thinking such as analysis and synthesis. It is a very powerful tool allowing writers to make meaning and to reflect on their own thoughts, and Erkan and Şaban (2010:165) state “it is an active and productive skill”.

Writing is also considered as a tool allowing the writer to think about the language and writers are able to express thoughts, share ideas, and feelings through this medium. According to Olson (2008), people make thoughts real through writing. Langer and Applebee (1987) emphasize that while writing, the writer thinks, works on the concepts and his or her ideas and explores the relationship between themes and personal experiences. Writing is also regarded as one of the basic tools of civilization

(Fromkin, Rodman and Hyams, 1988).

Coulmas (2003:28) mentions about six different definitions of writing as a summary: “(1) a system of recording language by means of visible and or tactile marks; (2) the activity of putting such a system to use; (3) the result of such activity, a text; (4) the particular form of such a result, a script style such as block letter writing; (5) artistic composition; (6) a professional occupation.”

While giving the definition of writing, Brown (2000:341) emphasizes that “human beings universally learn to walk and to talk, but that swimming and writing are culturally specific learned behaviors. We learn to swim if there is a body of water available and usually only if someone teaches us. We learn to write if we are members of a literate society and usually only if someone teaches us”. This is also stated by Schellekens (2007) as writing can be learned, but a person needs to practice it frequently to learn it better. Graves (1983, cited in Akpınar, 2007) states that writing is considered as a skill to be needed for a whole life and it has many aspects such as communication, critical thinking, problem solving, self actualization and control of one’s personal environment. As Paker (2011) also suggests, writing is a network of complex skills, and students need them throughout their academic studies, and it requires a number of sub-skills that can be taught, practiced and mastered in a process.

Among language skills, writing has a different place in terms of its nature. “Writing ability unlike other skills such as speaking is not acquired naturally. It has to be learned, which means it should be taught formally, and it is usually transmitted in the form of a set of practices in schools or other environments” (Myles, 2002:4). On one hand it requires practice and experience, and on the other hand, it includes composing, the ability of expressing the information in the form of narratives or description, or to transform information into new texts.

Writing necessitates activities in a continuum from mechanical to more complex act of composing. Composing in second language is problematic for the students as they should formulate their ideas into communicative written texts and this is more complex than writing itself (Myles, 2002). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) explain this complexity explaining that while the student or the writer is combining the concepts, a

two-way interaction comes to scene in which the demand to developing the knowledge together with developing the text should be met. It can be stressed that writing requires conscious effort and practice in composing, developing, and analyzing ideas. Writing both in L1 and L2 requires proficiency in the use of language and application of effective writing strategies and techniques.

As it is clearly understood, writing has some distinctive features (Elbow, 1988, Schellekens, 2007, Brown, 2000, Hughey et al., 1983):

- It is a process
- It requires practice on the part of the writer
- It is not acquired but learned.
- It requires thinking
- It has structural patterns

2.3. WRITING IN A SECOND LANGUAGE

Language skills can be divided into listening, speaking, reading and writing. Among the four skills, listening and reading are grouped as “receptive skills,” and speaking and writing are branded as “productive or expressive skills.” Traditionally, the productive skill is taken as an active skill, and the receptive skill is a passive skill (Ur, 1996); thus, writing can be labeled both as a productive and an active skill.

Although writing was a neglected skill in teaching of English as a second or foreign language, it has gained importance over the last decade and a half (Matsuda and Silva, 2005). According to Grabe and Kaplan (1997) while learning English, all language learners need to attain some proficiency in writing. As it is mentioned before, writing is a complex skill both in L1 and in L2, and although there are differences between L1 and L2 writing, Silva (1997) emphasizes that L2 writers are less effective than the ones who write in their native language. The reason why writers are ineffective in writing in a foreign language may come from the fact that “writing skill may be labeled as intricate by an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) student” (Arslan and Zibande, 2010:109).

“Numerous studies suggest that L2 writers generally write shorter, less cohesive and fluent, and their products contain more errors” (Hyland, 2008:34). In a study, Zamel (1983) investigated six L2 students’ writing performances and she observed that “competence in writing was more important than the linguistic competence” and she concludes that poor L2 writers generally depend on L1 in their writing in L2 (cited in Kroll, 1990:41). The reason why many learners of English have troubles with writing may be that in the act of writing, the writer needs to equilibrate several aspects of writing such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, mechanics, and the language use according to the genre.

Early research on second language writing focused mainly on two approaches to writing and Brown (Brown 2000:335) points out that “these approaches are product and process approaches”. Additionally, apart from product and process approaches, the third approach came out which is also known as the genre approach.

2.3.1. Product approach to writing

According to Silva (1997), before 1960s, writing instruction was ruled by the principles of “the product approach’ which is also called ‘the traditional paradigm’ or “Learning to Write”. This approach was grounded on the idea that L1 writers were required to read written texts such as novels, essays, short stories, and poetry, and they had to write a composition about what they read. Hyland (2008) explains this approach as learning to write in a foreign or second language mainly involves linguistic knowledge and the vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices that comprise the essential building blocks of texts. Additionally, Nunan (1999:272) argues that “there are three basic strategies to foreign language writing as imitation, copying and transformation in product approach to writing”

Product approach goes in line with the audio-lingual ideology with a structural linguistic view that language is a system of structurally related elements for the encoding of meaning, and a behaviorist view that language learning is “basically a process of mechanical habit formation” (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:57). According to

Harmer (2004), the product approach focuses mainly on a task and on the end product.

In writing courses based on product approach, “teaching students punctuation, spelling, and correct usage was emphasized and the teachers commented on the finished products and graded them” (Dülger, 2007:105). Teachers provide models of good writing for their learners to follow so that they can avoid errors, but if they do make errors, the teacher will correct sentence structure, spelling punctuation and writing structures. Raimes (1983) asserts that in the instruction of writing as a product, writing had just consisted of practicing grammatical exercises.

As Malicka (1996) emphasizes that the popularity of product approach to writing stemmed from the fact that there is a limited time frame for teaching writing in educational settings. The teacher is expected to teach the writing in this limited frame which is contradictory to the nature of writing as it requires time and experience on part of the learner. Students have to learn the correct language structures first and apply them in their writing. Form and correctness were the focus of attention, and drills on specific skills were provided by the teacher who was the only audience and the judge.

Hyland (2008) states that product approach to writing is a four-stage process:

1. “Familiarization: Learners are taught certain grammar and vocabulary, usually through a text.
2. Controlled writing: Learners manipulate fixed patterns, often from substitution tables.
3. Guided writing: Learners imitate model texts.
4. Free writing: Learners use the patterns they have developed to write an essay, letter, and so forth” (p.146).

In short, product-based approaches see writing as mainly concerned with knowledge about the structure of language, and writing development as mainly the result of the imitation of input, in the form of texts provided by the teacher.

2.3.2. Process approach to writing

Process approach to writing emerged as a reaction or alternative to research on writing as a product and it mainly focuses on the writing process in which the writer goes through the links among thinking, learning and writing. One of the criticisms

against product approach was stated by Pincas (1962:185) as “the learner is not allowed to ‘create’ in the target language at all. The use of language is the manipulation of fixed patterns; these patterns are learned by imitation”.

According to Zamel (1983), as writing is a process, students learn about their own thoughts focusing on and assessing the meaning while writing. While attention is on the form and accuracy in product approach, process approach focuses on the content, meaning and finally on the form. In process writing, the teacher moves away from being someone who sets students a writing topic and receives the finished product for correction without any intervention in the writing process itself. As a result, as Linse (2005) suggests, “until the written piece is presented in a way that is polished and comprehensible to readers, the writer works on the ideas and works with them” (p.98).

Leki (1991) points out that the process approach places more emphasis on stages of writing as a process rather than considering it as an end product. The writer is expected to go through stages such as pre-writing, writing, revision, and editing. Certainly, each stage has its own rules, activities, and behaviors to be displayed (Brown, 2000). A typical prewriting activity in the process approach would be for learners to brainstorm on the topic of houses. At the composing/drafting stage they would select and structure the result of the brainstorming session to provide a plan of a description of a house. This would guide the first draft of a description of a particular house. After discussion, learners might revise the first draft working individually or in groups. Finally, the learners would edit or proof-read the text. As Nunan (1991) clearly states, a writer will get closer to perfection by producing, reflecting on, discussing and reworking successive drafts of a text.

As Harmer states (2004), White and Arndt view writing as re-writing and it includes revision which means checking it from a new point of view, (White and Arndt 1991:5; cited in Harmer 2004). White and Arndt (1991) have developed a model and according to that model writing has interrelated recursive stages as: discussion; brainstorming-making notes, asking questions; fast writing-selecting ideas or establishing a viewpoint, rough drafting; preliminary self-evaluation; arranging information- structuring the text; first draft; group/ peer evaluation and responding; second draft; self-evaluation- editing, proofreading; finished draft and the respond to it.

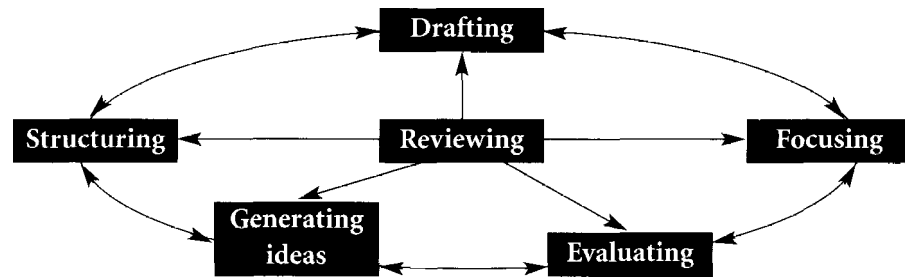


Figure 2.1. White and Arndt's model (cited in Harmer, 2004:258)

2.3.3. Genre approach to writing

When we look at the shift from the product approach to genre approach in the mid-1980s, it is seen that genre approach paid more attention to the nature of writing in various situations, which focuses on models and key features of texts written for a particular purpose (Kim and Kim, 2005). Like product approach, genre approach regards writing as predominantly linguistic; however, it emphasizes that writing varies with the social context in which it is produced (Badger and White, 2000). The notion of genre is defined as “abstract, socially recognized ways of using language” (Hyland, 2008:21) which are purposeful communicative activities employed by members of a particular discourse community.

In contrast to process approach, genre-based approach views writing as a social and cultural practice. This involves not simply activities in a writing process, but also the purpose of writing, the context where the writing occurs, and the conventions of the target discourse community. However, Kim & Kim emphasize (2005) that the emergence of genre theory does not attempt to replace or suggest abandoning the process approach to writing, but draws on the demand for a more balanced approach to teaching ESL/EFL writing.

The basic idea underlying genre approach is that the writer has a purpose in mind for writing and that purpose goes with definite conventions or boundaries. Badger and White (2000:155) explain that “different kinds of writing, or genres, such as letters of apology, recipes, or law reports, are used to carry out different purposes”.

In their article, Badger and White (2000) mention a diagrammatic explanation of genre developed by Martin (1993: 120):

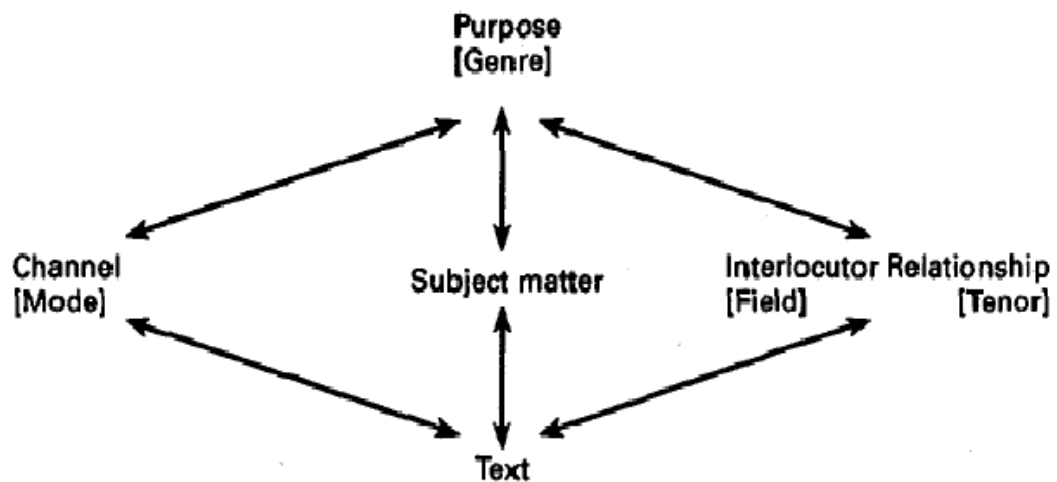


Figure 2.2. Martin's Models of Genre (Taken from Badger and White, 2000:155)

The popularity of genre approach to writing led to new directions at the end of the twentieth century. Although genre was regarded as form, the new ideas insisted that it was not form only but it was composed of form and situation (Giltrow, 2002: 24) :

$$\textit{Form} + \textit{situation} = \textit{genre}$$

2.4. TEACHING ACADEMIC WRITING

In higher education institutions, writing at the center of teaching and learning process fulfills a set of purposes in different contexts in which it occurs. These purposes include (Curry and Lillis, 2003):

-“assessment: the major reason or the purpose why academic writing in L2 is taught in universities is that students are required to produce essays, written examinations or reports in which the main purpose is to show their mastery of disciplinary course content

-learning: teaching academic writing helps the learners comprehend the disciplinary knowledge as well as develop more general abilities to reason and critique.

-entering particular disciplinary communities: whose communication norms are the primary means by which academics transmit and evaluate ideas. As students progress through the university, they are often expected to produce texts appropriate to their own disciplines” (p.13).

Writing instruction tends to focus on one type of writing essay. In a very recent study, Agham (2011:14) points out that “when students arrive at university or college, they are inexperienced in producing a form of writing which serves the academic situations”. Before teaching essay writing and essay types, most universities teach paragraph writing and paragraph writing genres.

2.4.1. Paragraph writing

Throughout the history of writing, the idea of using individual units of thought as the organizing method for writing can first be attributed to Bain (1909). As a result of his studies, Bain (1909) defined paragraph as a “single unit of thought, provided writers with a way both to break down large ideas into a series of smaller ideas and to make sure that each smaller idea got the attention it deserved” (cited in Berlin, 1984:69).

Today, again, similar to Bain’s definition, many scholars define it as “a brief unit of communication in a relatively fixed form” (Donald, Moore, Morrow, Wargetz, Werner, 1999: 12). A paragraph can stand alone or it can be part of a longer piece of writing, and the paragraph is the building block of longer forms of writing such as essays. Blanchard and Root (2004) explain that paragraphs include many different kinds of information and serve different purposes such as describing things, narrating events, comparing or contrasting two things, explaining causes or effects and explaining how to do things.

Writers use paragraphs to explain their thoughts and while they are doing this, they organize their ideas in a logical way; thus paragraphs should have a logical order and have some function (Donald, Moore, Morrow, Wargetz, Werner, 1999:2):

“1. It focuses on one major idea called the controlling idea. It contains only material that pertains to the controlling idea so that reader is not distracted by irrelevant

details.

2. It provides enough details to develop and discuss the controlling idea so that the reader understands completely the writer's point.
3. It is logically organized so that the reader can clearly see a controlling idea, a body of supporting details, and a conclusion.
4. It says something worth saying in precise and specific sentences and words".

As it is clearly understood, a paragraph is a set of sentences which are all connected to one topic and there are three elements in paragraphs. According to Wong (2009) the essential units in a paragraph are: "the topic of the paragraph: the subject", "the main idea of the paragraph: the writer's main point", the important details of the paragraph: supporting details of the main idea" (p.194).

The sentences in a paragraph are all tied to one topic and it is the unity and coherence among the sentences that construct a well developed paragraph. Unity is "oneness" which indicates that all elements in the paragraph are relevant to central thought (Olson, 2003:21). As Olson (2003) suggests "unity" requires the writer to give enough information about topic. It should be noted here that the sentences produced in the paragraph must include the essential points and should not give place to unnecessary points. In other words, in order not to distract or mislead the reader away from the topic, unity should be provided in a paragraph. However, unity should not be confused with "sameness". It doesn't mean repetition of the topic all the time, but to include the necessary information about it.

Another aspect of a good paragraph is "coherence". Coherence means that the sentences should be organized in a logical manner and should follow a definite plan of development. "Paragraph coherence is concerned with the order in which the information is presented and with clear and logical relationship of one statement to the next in the development of ideas; that is, a coherent paragraph conveys information clearly and effectively" (Nancy, 2008:156).

Winkler and Metherell (2008) suggest four important issues to pay attention in order to get a coherent paragraph and these are;

- "a) Repeat key words and use clear pronouns: this is about using appropriate

pronouns such as “it, she, he etc.” instead of repeating the subject all the time; b) Use parallel structures: the deliberate use of certain words, phrases provides cohering and harmony; c) Use transitional markers; d) Use transitional sentences: if there is another paragraph following one, it should be started with a straddling sentence” (p.110-111).

2.4.1.1. Parts of a paragraph

In simplest form, a paragraph contains a topic sentence, and clearly related supporting sentences. The topic sentence contains the main point or idea of the paragraph, while supporting sentences provide details or secondary information. Each paragraph should be organized for continuity; that is, a smooth flow of the ideas should be maintained within sentences and other paragraphs (Yang and Yang, 1995).

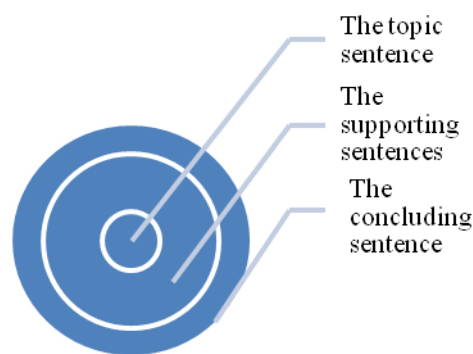


Figure 2.3. Parts of a paragraph

Topic Sentence: The topic sentence is usually the first sentence of a paragraph and it is the most important part as it has the function of controlling all the other sentences. It states the topic (main idea) and the focus (controlling idea) of the paragraph. Controlling idea is a statement in the topic sentence which expresses an emotion, opinion, approach or a commitment to the topic; in short it is what the writer says about the topic (Blanchard and Root, 2004).

A good topic sentence:

- states the topic of the paragraph
- identifies the controlling idea (focus)

Supporting Details: The sentences that follow the topic sentence are called body sentences or supporting details. They tell more about the topic by adding more details and each detail should make the topic more interesting or help explain what the writer means. Expanding the main idea through facts, examples, or whatever details are necessary help the reader understand the main idea and this gives the paragraph coherence. Additionally supporting details should be arranged in an order to be followed easily (Stout, 1998).

Concluding Sentence: Writing concluding sentences is the last step of a paragraph. They restate the idea of the topic sentence or they summarize the paragraph in such a way so as to expose the relevance of supporting sentences in the context of the topic sentence. The concluding paragraph should bring the reader full circle.

2.4.1.2. Paragraph types

There are different paragraph types and each of them serves a different purpose. According to the writer's aim in writing a paragraph, style of that paragraph type may show differences and similarities. Paragraph types can be classified as:

2.4.1.2.1. Descriptive paragraph

“Descriptive writing means to describe a subject so that the reader can see, smell, hear or feel” (Nazario, Borchers and Lewis, 2010:17). Its main purpose is to explain how a person or a thing looks or feels in addition to describing a place also. While writing a descriptive paragraph, the details mentioned should give the reader a feeling such as happiness, excitement, anger or fear. One of the main characteristics of descriptive paragraph is the use of adjectives heavily. Words are generally categorized as sight, smell, feel, hear and taste. At this point, it is of great importance to use the adjectives in correct order. The order of adjectives is “opinion, size, age, shape, color, origin, material and finally noun”. Additionally, another aspect of descriptive paragraphs is the use of “spatial order” which is the arrangement of items in order by space from top to bottom or left to right etc (Çakar and Ekinçier, 2010).

2.4.1.2.2. Process paragraph

A process explains how things are done or how things happen through steps. There are two important features of process paragraphs:

- “a. A process paragraph consists of a series of connected steps
- b. These steps must be logical and are often in chronological order” (Çakar and Ekincier, 2010:22).

2.4.1.2.3. Opinion paragraph

Savage and Shafiei (2007:100) mention that “in an opinion paragraph, the writer expresses and supports an opinion on a particular topic or issue”. They also acknowledge that the writer must give reasons that help persuade the reader to agree with him or her. One of the most important points in writing an opinion essay is to differentiate an opinion from a fact. “Facts are confirmable through observation; however, opinions are interpretations of facts, so opinions can just be supported but not proved” (Jones and Farness, 2002:24). The critical issue to pay attention here is to write the main idea clearly and it should be about an opinion, not a fact. Facts can only take place in the supporting part of the paragraph.

2.4.1.2.4. Comparison and/or contrast paragraph

Meyers (2005:94) explains that “comparisons and contrasts examine the similarities and differences among people, ideas, or things. A comparison shows how people or things are similar. A contrast shows how they are different, usually to evaluate them. And a comparison-contrast paragraph discusses both similarities and differences. To do so, it must also organize, explain, and illustrate the similarities and differences in ways that make sense. There are two main strategies for organizing the comparisons and contrasts:

Whole-to-Whole (or Block) Organization: In this organization, the writer describes one thing completely, and then goes through describing another thing completely. Then, she or he draws the comparisons and contrasts while describing one

aspect of the compared or contrasted item following the other item. Part-to-Part Organization: in this organization, the writer describes one part of item “A”, such as its plot, and then compares it to the plot of item “B”. Then she or he returns to item “A” to describe its acting, followed by a comparison to the acting in item “B”. The writer continues in this way until she or he has drawn all the comparisons and contrasts between the two movies. If the writer discusses point A about one subject, then your readers must see its relationship to point A about the other (Meyers, 2005).

2.4.1.2.5. Cause and effect paragraph

Cause and effect paragraphs are concerned with why things happen (causes) and what happens as a result (effects). Cause and effect is a common method of organizing and discussing ideas. Writers may have the difficulty of distinguishing between cause and effect. To determine causes, the writer should ask "Why did this happen?" Asking “What happened because of this?” identifies effects. The following is an example of one cause producing one effect:

Cause: You are out of gas.

Effect: Your car won't start.

Sometimes, many causes contribute to a single effect or many effects may result from a single cause. Cause/effect paragraphs generally follow basic paragraph format. That is, they begin with a topic sentence and this sentence is followed by specific supporting details. For example, if the topic sentence introduces an effect, the supporting sentences all describe causes. Similarly, if topic sentence mentions about a cause, the body sentences all support topic sentence explaining the effects.

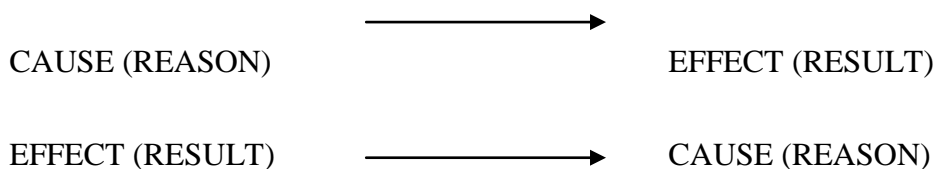


Figure 2.4. Cause and effect format (cited in Çakar and Ekincier, 2010)

2.4.2. Essay writing

It is generally agreed that after having the experience of paragraph writing, the skills mastered in it will help the writer to build up essay writing. Blanchard and Root (2004) say that “once you know how to write a paragraph, it is not much more difficult

to write an essay; an essay is just longer”. Meyers (2005:38) defines essay as “an organized discussion of a subject in a series of paragraphs”. *Webster’s New Twentieth Century Dictionary* defines an essay as “a short literary composition dealing with a single subject, usually from a personal point of view and without attempting completion.”

According to McWhorter (2000), an essay is a group of paragraphs about one subject. McLaren (2001:16) states that “an essay is a sustained argument, developing from, or weighing the evidence about, an idea or question, and creating a full and satisfying conclusion”.

It is understood from his definition that there are three important features found in an essay McLaren (2001):

- “argument: which means that the basic line of an essay is to develop an opinion, idea, response, theme, description, evaluation, assessment or theory and all of them form the basis of backbone of the essay, mainly the thesis” (p.17).

McLaren (2001) summarizes this feature of essay resembling to a tree. He mentions that essay is a like a tree growing from a simple seed which then provides the trunk making it more complex together with its branches.

- “sustained: the argument or the “thesis” is sustained by reference to facts, examples, interpretations, analysis and critical thinking. Sustaining the essay shows that the writer has a logical understanding of the topic and ability to reason, argue an opinion and make judgements and analyze the thesis which in turn characterizes the writer’s ability of expression skills.

- full conclusion: this is where the essay bears fruit from the point of “tree” metaphor. It is not only the summary of the issue discussed but also conclusion is the part where the writer looks at the implications and their significance in detail in the light of argument discussed”.

(McLaren, 2001:17)

Meyers (2005) emphasizes that a paragraph and an essay show some similar traits:

The paragraph discusses a limited topic, which it introduces in a topic sentence and then supports in separate sentences. The topic sentence helps determine and shape

the content of the paragraph. The essay explores a broader topic, which it introduces in a thesis statement and then supports in separate paragraphs. The thesis statement helps determine and shape the content of the entire essay.

An essay is not simply a longer version of a paragraph. The content of the essay is more complex and needs more development. However, the essay is similar to the paragraph in structure, for it contains three parts.

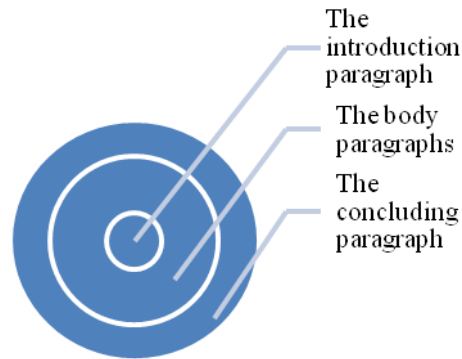


Figure 2.5. Parts of an essay

2.4.2.1. Parts of an essay

The introduction—that is, the first paragraph of the essay—attracts the readers' interest, makes the primary claim of the essay in a thesis statement, and may introduce the ideas of the body paragraphs. The introduction should help readers predict the ideas you will develop in the remainder of the essay.

The body—at least three paragraphs and often more—develops and supports the thesis by breaking it down into smaller ideas. In a well-organized essay each body paragraph:

1. introduces its supporting idea in a topic sentence
2. develops the idea in the body
3. then concludes with a transition to the next paragraph

The conclusion—the last paragraph of the essay—ties all the essay's ideas together and includes a strong ending.

Comparison of parts of a paragraph and an essay can be summarized as in Table 2.1. (Çakar, Ekincier and Paker, 2011):

Table 2.1. Comparison of parts of a paragraph and an essay

THE PARAGRAPH	THE ESSAY
The topic sentence states the topic.	The introductory paragraph states the topic.
The topic sentence states the controlling idea.	The thesis statement states the controlling idea.
The topic sentence is the first sentence of a paragraph.	The thesis statement is the last sentence of an introductory paragraph.
The supporting sentences reflect the Idea in the topic sentence.	The supporting paragraphs reflect the idea in the thesis statement.
The conclusion is the last sentence of a paragraph.	The conclusion is the last paragraph of an essay.

2.4.2.2. Essay types

2.4.2.2.1. Classification essay

In a classification essay, the writer organizes things into categories and gives examples of things that fit into each category. Before writing, it is necessary to decide on the classification criteria. The writer should carefully think about the properties of the things to be classified. The criteria must be discriminating and the emerging classes should be non-overlapping; that is, there must be a single principle of organization (Nazario, Borchers and Lewis, 2010).

Steps to Effective Classification:

1. Sort things into useful categories.
2. Make sure all the categories follow a single organizing principle.
3. Give examples that fit into each category.

This is a key step in writing a classification essay. To classify, or sort, things in a logical way, the writer should find the categories to put them into.

Wingersky, Boerner and Balogh (2009:389) mention three important features about the parts of a classification essay: the introduction paragraph contains the thesis

sentence which establishes the basis for classification. The thesis statement includes the topic and how it is classified; each support paragraph discusses a separate category mentioned in the thesis statement. Each paragraph explains how the items in each category are alike and each category is different from the other categories; the conclusion reaffirms the categories established in the thesis sentence.

2.4.2.2.2. Process essay

The process essay explains the steps involved in doing something. It is used to explain an action or a task and describes in detail the full process of completing the action. “The details must be as vivid as possible and the organization must be clear so that a reader who has never gone through this process can follow them to completion” (Lindler, 2005:271). There are two types of process essays: those that instruct and those that explain or analyze. These two types are especially important in scientific and mathematical writing. In scientific writing, process essay is used to describe, for example, biological processes or chemical processes like drug interactions and technical processes. It is also used in mathematics to explain how to solve complex math problems (Stempel, 2010).

It is worth mentioning here that while writing the process essay, a step-by-step explanation is necessary because the most common failing of a process essay is the writer’s assumption that a step is too self-evident to be included. “Most writers leave out some important steps considering the reader already knows them and this kind of omission becomes especially acute if left out of directions on how to assemble something and so on” (Metherell and Winkler, 2009:314). Additionally, one of the characteristics of the process essay is the common use of commands in second person singular or plural pronouns or the use of advice structures such as “should”.

2.4.2.2.3. Comparison and contrast essay

Writing a comparison and contrast essay is not simply a list of similarities and differences; it establishes an opinion about two items and compares and contrasts them to support that opinion. “The goal in writing a comparison and contrast essay is to set two or more subjects side by side and to show the reader how they are similar and/or different“ (VanderMey, 2009:200).

The organization of comparison and contrast essay is different from other essay types and as Hall and Yung (2000) emphasize, there are two methods of organizing comparison and contrast essay, and these methods are point-by-point and block method.

Point by Point Method:

“The point-by-point method in writing comparison and contrast essay discusses one aspect of both subjects in one paragraph and then other aspect in another. In the point-by-point method, internal conclusions about subjects are drawn throughout the essay” (Williamson, 2002:222). It keeps each set of points for discussion close together and the reader does not have to remember as much information. However, it has the danger of looking very mechanical and monotonous. Another danger of point by point model is that it does not provide a unified discussion of the two sides.

Block Method:

“In block method format, one subject is discussed first, then the second. In this method, the essay hinges on the impact of the concluding paragraph” (Williamson, 2002:222). This organization method allows the reader to see the whole picture of the two sides. Additionally, when compared to point-by-point method, it does not look monotonous and mechanical.

2.4.2.2.4. Cause and effect essay

Cause and effect essays explore why things happen –causes- and what happens as a result –effects. These essays give reasons and explanations for behaviors, events, or circumstances. It is worth noting here that “the writer should present the issues in a factual way and in the thesis statement it should be explained whether the causes, effects or both will be discussed” (Bowers, 2006:15). The point that the writer should pay attention to is that the purpose of writing in cause and effect may be to inform, or to persuade the reader, the writer should highlight whether he or she is going to inform or persuade the audience focusing on the causes or effects.

The introduction paragraph of cause and effect essay presents a reason or a cause for a particular event, situation or trend and then explains the results or consequences of that situation. The thesis statement needs to summarize the patterns and relationships

within and between the most significant causes and effects related to the topic (Stempel, 2010). As it is also stated by Stempel (2010), to adequately support the thesis statement, body paragraphs must provide a reasonable background in order for the reader to understand the analysis and the writer must use sources that state facts, evidences, examples and anecdotes. In the concluding paragraph, the writer summarizes the causes or the effects again, gives a general evaluation of the ideas presented and reflects upon them briefly (Çakar, Ekincier and Paker, 2011).

2.4.2.2.5. Problem-solution essay

In a problem-solution essay, the writer provides the reader with a detailed analysis of a subject- from a clear statement of the problem to a full discussion of possible solutions. It is important to examine the subject from a number of different angles before proposing any solutions (Kemper and Meyer, 2001).

In the introduction, the writer gives background information to the topic to be addressed. Additionally, the thesis sentence includes at least two viable solutions to the problem. In the body, the first paragraph gives a detailed description of the solution and how it will work. The other body paragraphs may vary; one may give reasons why the solution will work, another may describe the benefits of the solution, and if there is, the third may compare the solution to a more common solution (Zemach and Stafford, 2008).

In the problem-solution essay, the conclusion often mentions the problem again. Then it summarizes the solutions that were discussed in the essay. The final closing sentence in the conclusion often comments optimistically about the success of the solutions (Zemach and Stafford, 2008).

2.4.2.2.6. Argumentative essay

According to Luckhardt and Bechtel (1994), the goal of an argumentative essay is to convince the reader of a conclusion, so the writer must be making a claim of some kind. Kirszner and Mandell (2008:125) state that

“because an argumentative essay attempts to change the way people think, it must focus on a debatable topic, one about which reasonable people may disagree.

Factual statements –verifiable assertions about which reasonable people do not disagree- are, therefore, not suitable as topics for argument”.

Adams (2010) emphasizes that factual statements are not appropriate for writing an argumentative essay as there is nothing to argue, and he mentions in order for a topic to be discussed, the condition to write about a debate topic is there must be counterarguments to make against that topic. According to Hyland (1990:68) the argumentative essay is defined by “its purpose which is to persuade the reader of the correctness of a central statement”.

This essay type is characterized by a three stage structure which represents the organizing principles of the genre: thesis, argument and conclusion. In turn, each stage has a structure expressed in terms of moves, some of which are optional elements in the system. “An argumentative essay should advance each of the premises of the basic argument in turn, each with a paragraph that begins with a restatement of the premise and continues by developing and defending it” (Weston, 2009:61).

As it is known, to make an argumentative essay strong, the writer should include a counter argument and refutation. Counter argument: a possible argument against writer’s opinion. By giving a counter argument, the writer presents opposing point of view. Refutation: writer’s response to the counter argument. By giving a refutation, the writer shows why the counter argument is weak and his/her position is strong (Çakar, Ekincier and Paker, 2011).

Additionally, as the purpose of writing argumentative essay is to persuade or convince the reader that the writer’s point of view is better than the opposing view, the audience is one of the most important issues while proposing the topic (Adams, 2010). He also suggests that after the introducing the topic and thesis statement to the reader, the writer should combine rational appeals involving logical evidence that supports the thesis with emotional appeals to attract the reader’s feelings and beliefs.

2.5. FEEDBACK IN WRITING

Feedback is a crucial component of language learning process and it is seen as a key to improve knowledge and skill acquisition. Additionally, it is regarded as

beneficial in terms of examining success and failure of performance. Ur (1996:242) defines feedback as “information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of a learning task, usually with the objective of improving this performance”. According to Ellis (2003:583), feedback is actually one of the terms covering the area of error treatment and it “serves as a general cover term for the information provided on the reception and comprehension of messages”. Harmer (2004:108) sees feedback as “a reaction to students’ work and they expect it on what they are doing or what they have done”.

Among other skills, feedback is also important in teaching and learning the writing skill. According to Dheram (1995) feedback is central in the teaching and learning of writing. It is so important that it increases language awareness on the part of the learner and they can write more effectively. Students need feedback to improve their writing (Taylor, 1981). Siskin (2007:50) states that “because students see writing as a language exercise, they appear to be more interested in linguistic problems than in rhetorical problems and they tend to look to linguistic instruction as a means to correct errors”. One critical issue that rises at this point is the distinction between correction and assessment.

In the assessment, the learner is simply “informed how well or badly he or she has performed such as “fair” at the end of a written assignment”, however, in correction “some specific information is provided on aspects of the learner’s performance through explanation, or provision of better alternatives, or through elicitation of these from the learner” (Ur, 1996:242). For many years, teachers regarded feedback as correcting the students’ written text in terms of grammar. This was due to the impact of product approach on writing which continued to be effective in writing instruction until the 1970s. In this approach, the teacher explains how to write an essay and gives them a topic to write about, and finally when the students write it, the teacher just corrects the spelling, grammar and punctuation. This situation has been summarized by Truscott (1996:329) that L2 teachers viewed feedback as ““correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student's ability to write accurately". However, Truscott (1996) emphasizes that grammar correction should be abandoned because it’s harmful and

has no leading effect on students' writing ability. Similarly, Kepner (1991) also argues that grammar correction on student writing should be limited with "low proficiency" learners and it should be avoided on "high proficiency" learners. According to Ferris (1999), if the correction of grammatical errors is done using less effective ways, it may mislead the learners and it should only be done electively. Although there have been interests into other areas of feedback in writing such as feedback on content, peer correction, a very recent study by Lee (2011) revealed that teachers focus predominantly on the language form in responding to student writing. The reason for this tendency again may be that Leki (1991) emphasizes students see writing as producing text without an error, so they want their teachers to correct their papers fully.

When the product approach gave its place to process approach, the interest in feedback studies focused on the content rather than on the grammar correction. Semke (1984) made a study comparing four different feedback types as commenting on student writing together with asking questions, labeling the errors and providing the correct form; giving comments in a positive way and combining them with the corrections necessary and finally giving codes to errors. She found that students receiving feedback on content performed better than the ones receiving feedback on form only. This result suggests that feedback on content in the students' writing enhances the progress of the students' writing.

Fathman and Whailey (1990) made a study on the effectiveness of teacher feedback on writing, and according to their study, feedback given on content improved students writing content. In a study conducted by Kepner (1991), students were compared in terms of type of feedback as form and content. The results showed that those who received feedback on content were better than ones who were given feedback based on grammar.

Keh (1989) states that teachers may respond to content with comments such as "good point" or "I agree" however, such phrases in responding the content were problematic on part of the students as they needed more clarification. In order to overcome this insufficiency to the feedback on content, she gives six recommendations on how to write better guiding comments:

1. “connect comments to lesson objectives (vocabulary, etc.);
2. note improvements: ‘good’, plus reasons why;
3. refer to a specific problem, plus strategy for revision;
4. write questions with enough information for students to answer;
5. write summative comment of strengths and weaknesses;
6. ask ‘honest’ questions as a reader to a writer rather than statements which assume too much about the writer’s intention/meaning” (p.303).

Apart from teacher feedback, students can also get the help of each other for reflection on their writing processes. This situation has been emphasized by some scholars that learners themselves can also be the feedback providers for each other (Donato, 1994). As students are also the readers as well, together with being a writer, they can give feedback to their peers. Kroll (2001) emphasizes that the idea of students’ providing feedback to their papers was accepted by many teachers of English. In fact, peer feedback is also known as co-operative learning. Additionally, peer feedback help learners in terms of peer relations and their intellectual and social upbringing. Hyland (2006) compares teacher feedback and peer feedback and he mentions that teacher feedback is more influential in terms of grammatical errors; however, feedback given by peers influenced student revision significantly and helped them to improve their texts in a better way. Another issue pointed out by Hyland is that affective factors should also be taken into consideration as students would prefer peer feedback. In order for the peer feedback to be effective, “teachers should train the students so that they engage with the task, be willing to be helpful to each other and give concrete advice” (Hyland, 2006:7). Thus, peer revision may not guarantee that writing develops in all aspects. What improves in writing may be affected by the type and the source of feedback.

2.6. ASSESSING WRITING

Assessment of writing is considered to be a complex issue as well as teaching it. Testing writing has been implemented in academic environment for the purpose of evaluating the students’ writing performances.

According to Bachman and Palmer (1996, cited in Weigle, 2002:40), there are two purposes of language tests, especially in writing, one of which is to make inferences about the language ability and the secondary one is to make decisions based on the inferences. In cases where a student’s language ability cannot be directly observed, writing performance of that student can be used as data for making a variety of

decisions at an individual, classroom and program level (Weigle, 2007). In many universities and preparatory schools where English is taught as a foreign language, writing course is taught based on process approach. In process approach implemented classroom the writing teacher has two roles during the process: evaluator and collaborator (Leki, 1991). In testing writing teachers embrace two approaches to writing assessment as direct and indirect. Coombe, Folse and Hubley (2010:71) define indirect measures of writing assessment as “assess correct usage in sentence-level constructions and assess spelling and punctuation via objective formats like multiple choice and cloze tests which also used to determine a student’s knowledge of writing sub-skills such as grammar and sentence construction”. According to Coombe, Folse and Hubley (2010), “direct measures of writing assessment assess a student’s ability to communicate through the written mode based on the actual production of written texts which requires the student to produce the content; find a way to organize ideas; and use appropriate vocabulary, grammatical conventions and syntax” (p.71). According to Kitao and Kitao (1996), essay writing is one of the common tasks used for writing tests and it is a direct measurement of writing assessment. Kitao and Kitao (1996) suggest that “if the future situation of the students will not include writing essays, the tester should carefully consider whether it is the best test of the students’ writing ability” (p.7). Additionally Weir (1990:60) suggests that “essay test is a suitable vehicle for testing writing skills such as the ability to develop an extended argument in a logical manner, which cannot be tested in other ways”. One of the major problems with testing writing is unreliability. According to Heaton (2003), two markers may differ enormously in respect of spread of marks on the student paper and markers may award their marks on (a) what a student has written; (b) what they believe the student meant by what she or he wrote; (c) handwriting and general appearance of what the student has written; and (d) previous knowledge of the student (p.144). Kitao and Kitao (1990:2) are of the opinion that “if the writing test is done in a way that it cannot be graded objectively, it is necessary to develop a scale that allows it to be graded as objectively as possible”. Brown (2001:356) states that “evaluation of writing in a process oriented classroom is a thorny issue” and he shows six general categories that are the basis for evaluation of student writing in a process oriented teaching:

“Content

- thesis statement
- related ideas
- development of ideas through personal experience, illustration, facts, opinions

- use of description, cause/effect, comparison/contrast,
- consistent focus

Organization

- effectiveness of introduction
- logical sequence of ideas
- conclusion
- appropriate length

Discourse

- topic sentences
- paragraph unity
- transitions
- discourse markers
- cohesion
- rhetorical conventions
- reference
- fluency
- economy
- variation

Syntax

Vocabulary

Mechanics

- spelling
- punctuation
- neatness and appearance” (cited in Brown, 2001:356)

According to Hyland (2003), there are four elements involving a good design of writing assessment and tests:

- Rubric: the instructions
- Prompt: the task
- Expected Response: what the teacher intends students to do with the task
- Post-task evaluation: assessing effectiveness of the writing task.

2.6.1 Writing assessment scales

As mentioned before, in order to provide validity and reliability in assessing writing, raters need assessment scales to grade student papers objectively. There are two main approaches to scales in testing writing; analytic scoring and holistic scoring.

2.6.1.1 Analytic scoring

Weir (1990:63) defines analytic scoring as “a method whereby each separate criterion in the mark scheme is awarded a separate mark and the final mark is a composite of these individual estimates”. Brookhart (1999) mentions that analytic scoring resembles to a checklist and the rater is able to evaluate the previously determined aspects separately in which each of the criteria is evaluated on a different descriptive scale. As Heaton (2003) suggests this scoring method is useful for classroom compositions as certain features are graded separately as grammatical accuracy, vocabulary, idiomatic expression, organization, relevance, coherence and students can see how their grades have been obtained. One of the criticisms against analytic scoring is that “concentration on the different aspects may divert attention from the overall effect of the piece of writing” (Hughes 2003: 93-94).

2.6.1.2 Holistic scoring

Hughes (2003:94) mentions that “holistic scoring (sometimes referred to as ‘impressionistic’ scoring) involves the assignment of a single score to a piece of writing on the basis of an overall impression of it”. In this scoring, individual features of a text, such as grammar, spelling, and organization, are not considered as separate entities. Since, in holistic scoring, the entire written text is evaluated as a whole, it is important to establish the specific criteria upon which the evaluation is to be based prior to undertaking the evaluation. This does not mean establishing a catalogue of precise individual errors that might appear, but rather deciding what impact the errors that are present have on the overall tone, structure, and comprehensibility of the writing sample (Terry, 1989). Coombe, Folse and Hubley (2010) see holistic scoring as quick and reliable on condition that three to four people mark each paper.

2.7. ATTITUDE STUDIES

There has been a great deal of research on the role of attitudes and motivation in second language learning. Generally, a learner’s motivation and attitude have been suggested to have an influence on that student’s success in L2 learning (Dörnyei, 2005, Gardner, 2006). Many researchers agree that assessing the attitude of a person is easier than describing the attitude itself (Brown, 1994). Although it is claimed that drawing the

borders of what an attitude is, it is important to look at the definitions of attitude.

Thurstone (1931:249) defined attitude as “the amount of affect a person has for or against an object”. Short after this definition, Allport (1935: 198) defined attitude more generally as “a mental and neural state of readiness to respond, organized through experience and exerting a directive and/or dynamic influence on the individual, responding to all objects and situations with which it is related”. According to Gardner (2006:413), attitudes are “relatively stable beliefs and feelings that predispose us to react objects, people, and events in certain ways”.

2.7.1 Research on attitudes towards writing

Research on writing suggest that in order to find out the reasons why students have difficulty in writing, their attitudes, feelings, anxiety, beliefs should be taken into account and research on these aspects may give an insight on students’ attitudes and their reason of having difficulty on this course (Harris et al, 2002). This case also explains why our study is important.

In order to measure writing attitudes and effect of attitudes in writing, Marx (1991) conducted a study on writing attitudes of first year writing college students. There were 70 students in the developmental writing group, 77 participants in the middle ability grouped and finally 68 advanced level writing group. They were asked to complete a questionnaire in which there were three open ended questions. When results were analyzed, the researcher found out that although their writing scores based on tests are homogenous, and their attitude towards writing varies. Many of the developmental level students share similar attitudes with the advanced level students. Middle ability group students show negative attitudes towards writing. However, when their test scores in writing were considered, they were expected to express higher attitude scores. As a final result, the researcher concludes that “a student’s writing ability does not necessarily correlate directly with his/her attitudes towards writing” (Marx, 1991:5).

Buhrke, Henkels, Klene, and Pfister (2002) conducted a study on how to improve fourth grade students’ writing skills and attitudes. The problems of inadequate writing skills and poor writing attitudes were documented through writing rubrics,

achievement tests, attitude surveys and teacher observations in the study. There were a total of 194 students as the participants of their study. The researchers developed the Fourth Grade Writing Rubric and administered a Writing Attitude Survey. The participants in the study were asked to write about their favorite season and the rubric was used to assess the writing prompt. During the study which continued for two months of application, students were administered a pre- and post- student writing prompt and they were assessed using the writing rubrics. During the study, teachers in classes continuously modeled the writing process and students were exposed to different types of writing and at the same time frequency and duration of writing were increased. Additionally, students were obliged to journal three to five times a week. During the action plan, seven types of writing throughout the 14 week intervention were used in the instruction of teaching. Through the writing of letters, essays, responses and paragraphs, researchers aimed at making writing an everyday reality for the participants. The results of the study showed that students in the study showed similar growth and improvement through process writing. The writing attitude survey administered as pre and post intervention revealed an increase in positive attitudes towards writing. Upon reviewing the data and analyzing the results, the researchers conclude that students' success in writing increased during the study when they were instructed in writing through a purposeful and multi-faceted approach. Additionally, focusing on the different aspects of writing based on mini-lessons also helped the participants understand different parts of writing in a better way. What is more, when students are exposed to writing which is real and meaningful, their attitude scores change within the instruction period.

One of the studies on attitudes towards writing was conducted by Gau, Hermanson, Logar and Smerek (2003) in the USA. Based on observation, students in the targeted second, third, fourth and fifth grade classrooms exhibited deficiencies in their writing abilities and lacked the motivation to effectively communicate through written expression. As a result, researchers made a study to improve their students' writing abilities and their attitudes towards writing. For this aim, they used pre-and post-implementation of curriculum based measurement for writing samples based on an action research project and in order to find out the changes in students' attitudes towards writing; they used a survey conducted as pre and post implementation of students' writings. There were 621 participants from the same school in the study. For each classroom, they made the students choose a topic they wanted to write and asked them

to keep a journal. This gave the students the opportunity to reflect on current topics being discussed in class and before the application the fundamentals of writing were communicated to the students through brainstorming activities, modeling and the reviewing of writing expectations. Results of their study indicated that when students are given routine writing opportunities, as well as frequent opportunities to write throughout the content areas, their attitudes toward writing will improve and the amount they write will also increase.

Graham, Berninger and Fan (2007) conducted a study on writing attitude and writing achievement. In the study, they tested three models of the structural relationship between the writing success of primary grade students and their attitude towards writing. The three models tested were: (a) writing attitude influences writing achievement in a unidirectional manner, (b) writing achievement influences writing attitude in a unidirectional manner, and (c) the effects of writing attitude and achievement are bidirectional and reciprocal. A sample of 128 first grade and 113 third grade children participated in the study. At the first grade level there were 70 girls and 58 boys, whereas at the third grade level there were 57 girls and 56 boys. The structural relation between students' writing attitude and writing achievement was examined using a structural equation modeling (SEM) approach and SEM was used to test three different models. The first model had a direct path from writing attitude to the writing achievement; the second model had a direct path from writing achievement to the writing attitude, whereas the third model involved a direct path from writing attitude to the writing achievement and from writing achievement to writing attitude. Although third grade students were better writers than first grade students, there was no statistical difference in younger and older students' attitude towards writing. In addition, girls were more positive about writing than boys, but there was no statistical difference in their writing achievement related to gender.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents information about the methodology, the participants, data collection procedures, instruments and materials, and the methods for data analysis.

3.2. RESEARCH DESIGN

This study aims to find out students' attitudes towards writing course at Pamukkale University and to investigate the correlation between students' attitudes and their overall performance in writing based on the proficiency exam results. Thus, we used the "survey method" in our study which aims to describe current or past situations or events considering the conditions and features of those events or situations, and if exists, the relationship between them (Kaptan, 1995, Karasar, 1998). This study was designed as a descriptive study. According to Rumrill, Cook and Wiley (2011), the primary goal in descriptive studies is to describe events, experiences, attitudes and observations rather than to establish a causal or predictive relation between variables. According to Creswell (2009), quantitative methods of research is a means for testing objective theories by examining the relationship among variables which can be measured so that numbered data can be analyzed using statistical procedures.

3.3. SETTING

We conducted the study on preparatory class students studying in the School of Foreign Languages at Pamukkale University. The students studying in departments whose medium of instruction is in English in their departments have to take English preparatory education for two terms (25 hours a week, a total of 32 weeks) in an academic year. Before they start to study in preparatory classes, they are placed in different levels such as elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate level according to the results of placement test given at the beginning of the academic year.

When the academic year starts, students in preparatory classes are exposed to writing exercises embedded in the core language course in the first three months until December. In December, writing course starts and they learn writing based on “process approach” (See Appendix 1 for the writing syllabus). During the academic year, the students are taught paragraph writing and paragraph types first, and then essay writing and essay types.

3.4. THE PARTICIPANTS OF THE STUDY

This study was conducted on the preparatory school students who studied English course for an academic year at Pamukkale University in the academic year 2009-2010.

There are a total of 17 departments which School of Foreign Languages offers English preparatory education. There are a total of 1171 students, 1023 of whom are in elementary level, 119 of whom are in pre-intermediate level, and finally 29 of whom are in intermediate level. The students have attended day and night classes. Within the scope of this study, the first attitude scale was administered only on pre-intermediate level and intermediate level students in all day and night classes.

Although there were 1171 students having English prep program, a total of 783 day and night class students from elementary, pre-intermediate and intermediate levels participated in the first and the second application of the study. The number of students

who participated in the first study is shown in the tables below according to their gender, departments, day and night class types, compulsory or elective English education, and finally their level of English.

3.4.1. The Participants according to gender

The distribution of the participants according to their gender has been shown in Table 3.1. According to Table 3.1, 99.7 % of the students marked the gender section in the questionnaire.

Table 3.1. Distribution of students participated in the study according to gender

Gender	N	%
Female	400	51.2
Male	381	48.8
Total	781	99.7

As is seen in Table 3.1, 51.2 % of the participants in the study are female, and 48.8 % of them are male students.

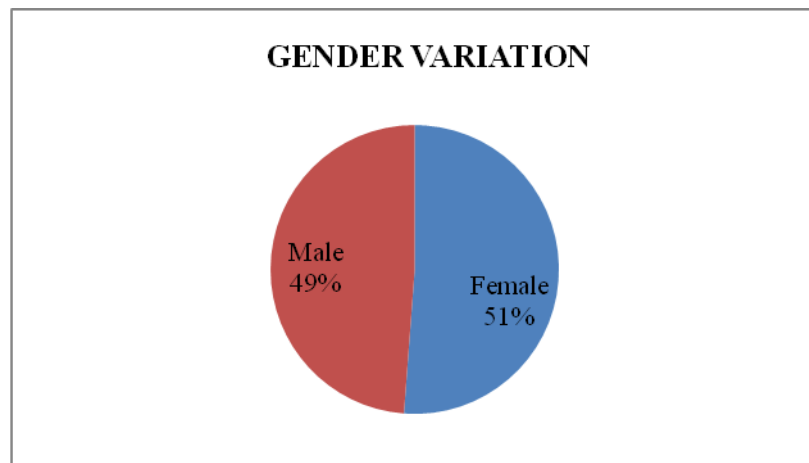


Figure 3.1. Distribution of students who participated in the study according to their gender

3.4.2. The participants according to age

Table 3.2 below shows the distribution of the participants according to their age:

Table 3.2. Distribution of the participants according to their age

Age	N	%
17	16	2.1
18	301	38.7
19	270	34.7
20	132	17.0
21	44	5.7
22	10	1.3
Other	4	0.5
Total	777	100

Among the participants, 99.2% of them marked their age range. 2.1 % of the students were 17 years old, 38.7 % was 18 years old, 34.7% was 19 years old, 17.0 % of them were 20 years old, 5.7 % was 21 years old, 1.3 % was 22 years old, and finally 0.5% of them were over 22.

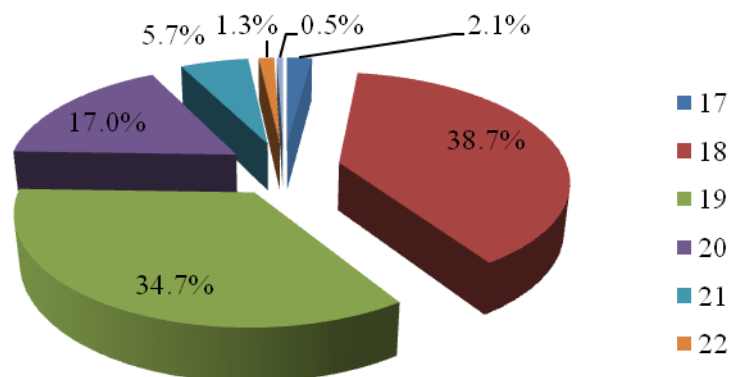


Figure 3.2. Distribution of the participants according to age

3.4.3. The participants according to departments

As the participants of this study, there are students from four different faculties as the Faculty of Economics, Faculty of Medicine, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Science and Literature. Apart from faculties, students from School of Tourism also participated in our study. A total of 783 students participated in the study from four faculties and one vocational school.

The percentages and distributions of the participants according to their departments have been shown in Table 3.3 and in Figure 3.3.

Table 3.3. Distribution of the participants in the study according to their departments

Department	N	%
Economics	174	22.2
Business Administration	171	21.8
Public Administration	144	18.4
Medicine	58	7.4
Biology	43	5.5
Environmental Engineering	23	2.9
Civil Engineering	17	2.2
School of Tourism	53	6.8
Other	93	11.9
Total	776	99.1

According to Table 3.3, 99.1 % of the students marked the department section in the questionnaire. According to Table 3.3, 22.2% of the participants were studying in the Department of Economics, 22.0% of them were the students from the Department of Business Administration, 18.6% was from the Department of Public Administration, 7.5% of the students were the ones from the Department of Medicine, 5.5% were the students from the Biology Department, and 3.0 % of them were from the Department of Environmental Engineering, 2.2% were from the Department of Civil Engineering, 6.8% were the students from the School of Tourism. Additionally, 12.0 % of the

participants were from other departments such as Food Engineering, Machinery Engineering, Electric-Electronic Engineering, Industrial Engineering, Geology Engineering, Computer Engineering and Textile Engineering.

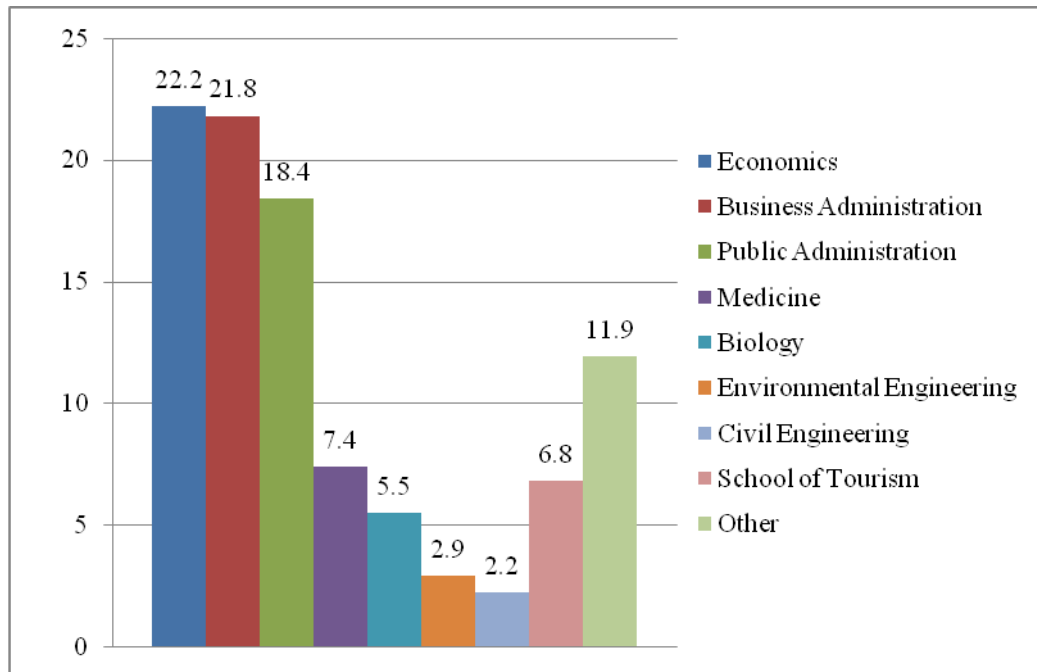


Figure 3.3. Distribution of the participants according to their departments

In the Faculty of Economics, there are three departments where English preparatory education is compulsory. These departments are the Department of Economics, Business Administration and Public Administration. The number of the participants from the Department of Economics is 174, Business Administration is 171, and Public Administration is 144. Although there are only three departments in this faculty, it has the highest number of the participants as preparatory class students in our study. There are a total of 489 participants from the Faculty of Economics in this study.

The students who participated in our study from the School of Physical Treatment and Rehabilitation were analyzed and included in the Department of Medicine. Thus, the participants under the title of “Medicine” include students both from the Faculty of Medicine and School of Physical Treatment and Rehabilitation. The number of the participants is 58. There are a total of 43 students from the Department of Biology, 23 students from the Department of Environmental Engineering, 17 students from the Department of Civil Engineering. Additionally, the number of the participants

from School of Tourism is 53 and finally 93 students participated in the study from other departments.

3.4.4. The participants according to type of education

Distribution of students who attend the School of Foreign Languages as day education and night education has been analyzed and shown in Table 3.4 below:

Table 3.4. Distribution of students participated in the study according to Type of Education

Type of Education	N	%
Day Education	397	50.8
Night Education	384	49.2
Total	781	100

Among the participants of this study, 50.8 % attend day classes and 49.2 % attend night classes. The response rate to this option was 99.7 %. Table 3.4 and Figure 3.4 below show the percentages and the distribution of the participants according to their type of education.

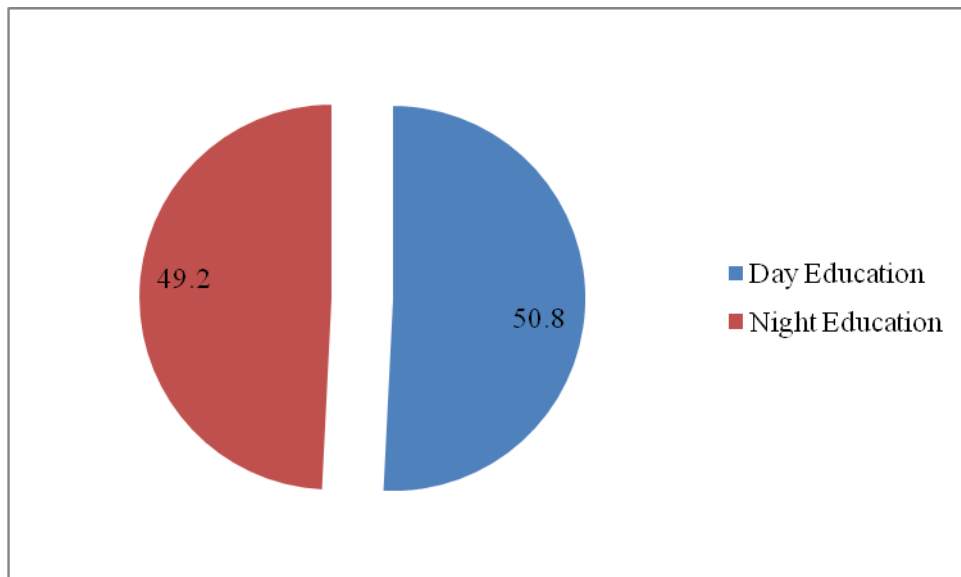


Figure 3.4. Distribution of the participants according to type of education

3.4.5. The participants according to preparatory class type

Table 3.5 and Figure 3.5 below show the percentages and distribution of the participants according to their preparatory class type as compulsory and elective.

Table 3.5. Distribution of the participants according to preparatory class type

Preparatory Class Type	N	%
Compulsory	697	89.2
Elective	84	10.8
Total	781	100

The response rate of preparatory class type in the questionnaire was 99.7%. According to the responses given, 89.2% of the students were learning studying English as compulsory and 10.8% chose to study as elective.

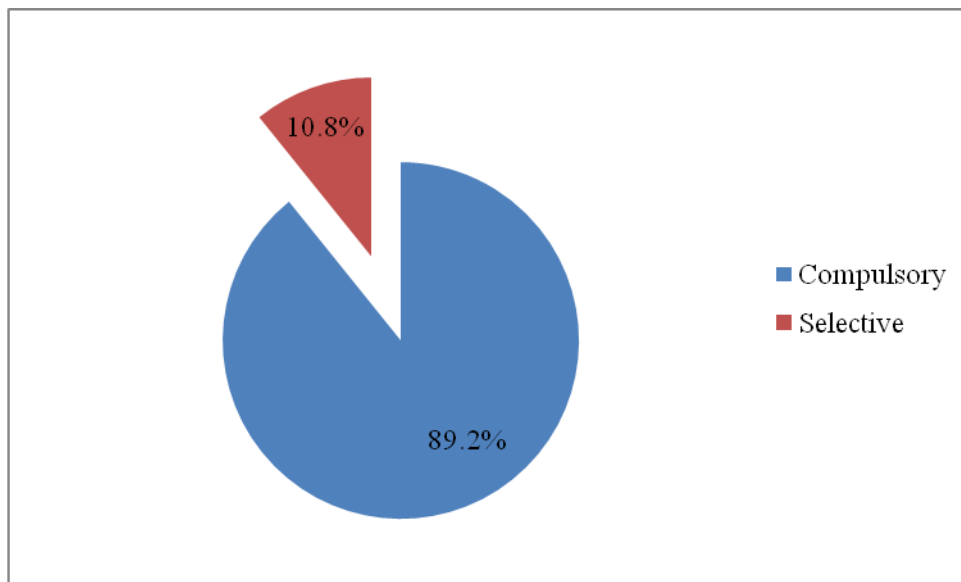


Figure 3.5. Distribution of the participants according to preparatory class type

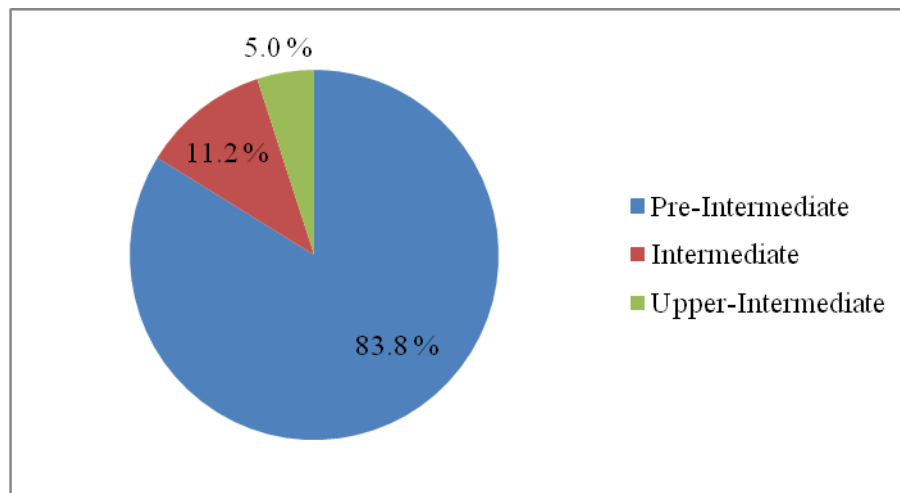
3.4.6. Participants according to level of English

The distribution and percentage of the participants according to their level of English have been shown in Table 3.6 and Figure 3.6.

Table 3.6. Distribution of the participants according to their level of English

Level of English	N	%
Pre-Intermediate	655	83.8
Intermediate	88	11.2
Upper-Intermediate	39	5.0
Total	782	100

Response rate of this item was 99.9 %. The participants' level of English was 83.8 % as Pre-Intermediate, 11.2% as Intermediate and 5.0 % as Upper-Intermediate.

**Figure 3.6.** Distribution of the participants according to their level of English

3.5. INSTRUMENTS AND PROCEDURES FOR DATA COLLECTION

In the study, we used a questionnaire in order to measure the attitudes of the students towards the writing course. Likert scale was used to find out the beliefs, attitudes and perceptions of the students. The instrument was applied twice as pre- and post-test in the study at the beginning and at the end of the second term. The reason for applying the questionnaire two times was to find out whether the students' attitudes changed within the course of instruction during the Spring Term.

3.5.1. Questionnaire

The questionnaire used in our study was adapted from Erdem (2007). He developed an attitude scale in order to measure the students' attitudes towards English course. Erdem aimed at developing an attitude scale and searching the psychometric properties of the scale to determine the degrees of attitudes of students. However, the scale he developed aimed at measuring the primary school students' attitudes towards English course, so we changed the questionnaire items into "writing course" items.

"One way of collecting data about attitudes is to ask questions about the attitude object to the participants directly. Asking questions directly to participants to collect data may be partly useful; however, it does not give reliable results. Another approach to collect data about attitudes is to use attitude scales in which participants give reactions to the certain attitudinal sentences."

(Tezbaşaran, 1993; cited in Erdem, 2007).

The questionnaire included 28 attitude items. The main purpose of the questionnaire was to gather the data which included items about students' opinions, beliefs and feelings towards the writing course. In the first part; there are items aiming at finding out demographic information about the students, such as information about the gender, age, and department, type of education, preparatory class and level of English.

In the second part, there are 28 attitudinal items (see Appendix II for the questionnaire applied). In the main study, the data collection procedure was administered in a class hour at their regular class time.

The attitude scale used as the data collection instrument in the study consisted of 28 attitudinal sentences:

Table 3.7. The attitude scale used to collect data

1	I want to improve my writing skill in English as much as possible.
2	English writing is one of the significant language skills.
3	I feel nervous and unhappy in English writing course.
4	I am not interested in improving my English writing skill.
5	I find it enjoyable to learn writing in English.
6	I would like the weekly hours of English writing skills course to be reduced.
7	I would like to deal with something else rather than trying to learn English writing skills.
8	I am interested in learning about different languages and cultures in English writing course.
9	I believe learning English will be useful for me all my life.
10	I look forward to English writing skills course.
11	In English writing course, I lose my interest when I forget the words or phrases I have learned.
12	I feel uneasy when I have to write about something in English.
13	I think it is meaningless to try to communicate in writing in English.
14	It widens one's perspective to learn writing in English.
15	I would like to have a pen pal with whom I could correspond in English.
16	I wouldn't think to have a job in the future which would require my corresponding in writing in English.
17	I lose my interest when I encounter a trouble in English writing course.
18	It feels like time passes fast in English writing course.
19	I feel that in English writing courses I get skills I'll need in the future.
20	I wouldn't attempt to learn English if the English writing course were not compulsory.
21	I don't think that acquiring English writing skills will be useful in life.
22	English writing course is unnecessary.
23	I like learning new things in English writing course.
24	English writing course is among the courses I like most.
25	I wouldn't like it to be compulsory to learn English writing.
26	I would like to take more lessons to improve my English and writing skills.
27	I hate English writing lessons.
28	I like studying English writing in my free times.

In the attitude scale, students were asked to select one of the statements among “SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), N (Neutral), D (Disagree), SD (Strongly Disagree) for each attitude item to reflect their opinions, beliefs and feelings towards the writing

course. The participation level intervals have been found using $n-1/n$ formula. As a result of computation, the interval scale is $5-1/5= 0.80$.

In the questionnaire there are equal number of positive and negative statements; thus while computing the participation level, positive and negative statements have been assigned opposite values. In the questionnaire, 14 of the statements are positive (1, 2, 5, 8, 9, 10, 14, 15, 18, 19, 23, 24, 26, 28), and the remaining 14 are negative (3, 4, 6, 7, 11, 12, 13, 16, 17, 20, 21, 22, 25, 27).

The interval scales in the study are shown in the Tables 3.8 and 3.9 below.

Table 3.8. Interval scale of the options in the questionnaire based on positive statements

Participation Level	Mean
Strongly Agree	4.21 – 5.00
Agree	3.41 – 4.20
Neutral	2.61 – 3.40
Disagree	1.81 – 2.60
Strongly Disagree	1.00 - 1.80

For each positive statement we assigned; “Strongly Disagree” 1; “Disagree” 2; “Neutral” 3; “Agree” 4; “Strongly Agree” 5.

Table 3.9. Interval scale of the options in the questionnaire based on negative statements

Participation Level	Mean
Strongly Disagree	4.21 – 5.00
Disagree	3.41 – 4.20
Neutral	2.61 – 3.40
Agree	1.81 – 2.60
Strongly Agree	1.00 - 1.80

For each negative statement we assigned; “Strongly Disagree” 5; “Disagree” 4; “Neutral” 3; “Agree” 2; “Strongly Agree”

The questionnaire was applied on 100 students in the pilot study. The scale's validity and reliability were tested after the piloting for the purpose of determining the students' attitudes towards writing course at Pamukkale University.

In the pilot study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was .894; additionally, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the main study was .91.

The values that are in the accepted level of reliability (Pallant, 2002) prove that the instrument is quite reliable for data collection. For the scale we used in our study, Erdem (2007) states that "as a result of Principal Component Analysis, it was found that scale items got together under one factor and the internal consistency of the scale is .97.

Table 3.10. Reliability statistics of the data collection instrument

Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.894	28

While applying the questionnaire the first time at the beginning of the second term, students in the classes were given a code as "Biology A1, A2, etc" or with their student numbers without writing their names. The coding was applied according to their departments so that the same students would participate in the second application. Before conducting the study both in the first and second application, the writing teachers were informed about how to apply the procedure and they were advised to give their own coding so that they would follow the same procedure in the second application. In order to see how students' attitudes changed, it was necessary that the same students participate in the second application, so the coding system used would guarantee this. The coding was administered as printed on the questionnaire and the students would just take the same code in the second application. They were assured that the data gathered would not be used for judgments or assessments by their instructors and they were told that the study is conducted to measure their attitudes towards the writing course only. In addition, the students were assured that they were not supposed to write their names on the questionnaire as they might hesitate and could hinder having objective results.

The main study was applied in two steps as pre-test and post-test. In the pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the spring term before the students took their writing course at preparatory class for the first time and posttest was conducted at the end of spring term just two weeks before they had their final exam. With this procedure, it was possible to find out how their attitudes changed between pre-test and post-test. After conducting the attitude scale to the same students, the number of whom was 783 in the first and second application, the results were analyzed in SPSS 16 and in the final step, students' final exam results were compared according to their attitude levels.

3.6. PROCEDURES FOR DATA ANALYSIS

After the questionnaire applications, questionnaire items were numbered and then quantified. Data gathered through questionnaires were described quantitatively and responses were analyzed using the statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 16.0

The data collected from the questionnaire in the pre-test and post-test were analyzed using descriptive statistics (frequency, percentage and mean scores). Each item in the questionnaire was analyzed and interpreted. In the questionnaire, Likert scale was used and each item was assigned points based on the positive statements and negative statements. While assigning points to the items, for each positive statement we assigned; "Strongly Disagree" 1; "Disagree" 2; "Neutral" 3; "Agree" 4; "Strongly Agree" 5. As the negative statements were valued just the opposite of the positive statement, for each negative statement we assigned; "Strongly Disagree" 5; "Disagree" 4; "Neutral" 3; "Agree" 2; "Strongly Agree" 1. In this way, high attitude scores would always show the positive attitudes (Erdem, 2007). The participants were asked to choose between five answers ranging from SA (Strongly Agree), A (Agree), N (Neutral), D (Disagree), SD (Strongly Disagree).

A sample of Likert Scale used in this questionnaire is provided below:

Writing course is among the course I like.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	4	3	2	1

As the sample size was bigger than 50, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was applied to determine the analysis instruments to be used in the study. In Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, the indifference of the sample to the normal distribution is assessed. Conformity of the distribution of sample to normal distribution is interpreted as the sample representing the target group, and this state is accepted to be supporting the validity of the scale.

Table 3.11. Results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis

Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test	Statistics	n	p
Attitude Scale Pre-Test Application	0.060	783	0.000
Attitude Scale Post-Test Application	0.072	783	0.000

Kolmogorov-Smirnov test intends to assess the distribution of data. If the data are found to be in normal distribution, parametric analysis methods such as t-test or variance analysis can be used. If the data are not in normal distribution, nonparametric chi-square method is used.

As the significance value of the analysis results is $p < 0.05$, the distributions of both samples were found to be abnormal. Within this framework, nonparametric methods were used in the statistical evaluation of the study. Mann Whitney U-Test was used to see whether the scores obtained from two unrelated samples showed a significant difference from each other or not. Kruskal Wallis t-Test was used to find out whether the sample average of two or more unrelated samples showed significance difference from each other or not. Wilcoxon signed-rank test was also used to test the significance of the difference of the scores belonging to related two assessment sets. Significance level was accepted to be $p < 0.05$ in these analysis.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of the study was to find out the attitudes and perceptions of the students towards the writing course at School of Foreign Languages, Pamukkale University, and to investigate the correlation between students' attitudes and their overall performance based on the proficiency exam results. In order to collect data for the purpose of finding out the attitudes of students towards the writing course, an attitude scale was used two times at the beginning and at the end of the second term. Then their attitudes were compared with their proficiency exam scores in writing.

For these purposes, this study attempted to address the following research questions:

1. What are the perceptions and attitudes of the students towards the writing course before they take it?
2. What are the perceptions and attitudes of the students towards the writing course after they take it?
3. To what extent do the perceptions and attitudes of the students change towards the writing course during the time they take writing course?
4. What are the perceptions of male and female students towards writing course?
5. To what extent do the perceptions and attitudes of the students towards writing course change according to students' level of English?
6. To what extent do the perceptions and attitudes of the students towards writing course change according to students' department at university?
7. Do the perceptions and attitudes of students towards writing course affect their

success in writing?

4.2. PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF THE STUDENTS TOWARDS THE WRITING COURSE BEFORE THEY TAKE THE COURSE

The first research question in our study was “*What are the perceptions and attitudes of the students towards the writing course before they take it?*” and in order to obtain data about this question, the questionnaire in Table 4.1 below was administered to the participants before they took writing course. To find out their attitudes before writing course, number of the participants reacting to each item, their participation levels and standard deviation have been analyzed. Students’ participation levels have been computed based on positive and negative sentences separately. Table 4.1 below shows the reactions students gave to the attitudinal sentences before they took writing course.

Table 4.1. Attitudes of students before taking the writing course

	Attitude Scale	N	Min	Max	Part. Level	Sd
1	I want to improve my writing skill in English as much as possible.	779	1	5	Strongly Agree	1.105
2	English writing is one of the significant language skills.	776	1	5	Agree	1.116
3	I feel nervous and unhappy in English writing course.	775	1	5	Neutral	1.185
4	I am not interested in improving my English writing skill.	768	1	5	Disagree	1.149
5	I find it enjoyable to learn writing in English.	771	1	5	Neutral	1.173
6	I would like the weekly hours of English writing skills course to be reduced.	772	1	5	Disagree	1.233
7	I would like to deal with something else rather than trying to learn English writing skills.	754	1	5	Disagree	1.140

8	I am interested in learning about different languages and cultures in English writing course.	771	1	5	Agree	1.233
9	I believe learning writing in English will be useful for me all my life.	779	1	5	Strongly Agree	1.137
10	I look forward to English writing skills course.	776	1	5	Disagree	1.052
11	In English writing course, I lose my interest when I forget the words or phrases I have learned.	779	1	5	Agree	1.272
12	I feel uneasy when I have to write about something in English.	778	1	5	Neutral	1.262
13	I think it is meaningless to try to communicate in writing in English.	779	1	5	Disagree	1.227
14	It widens one's perspective to learn writing in English.	776	1	5	Agree	1.207
15	I would like to have a pen pal with whom I could correspond in English.	776	1	5	Agree	1.291
16	I wouldn't think to have a job in the future which would require my corresponding in writing in English.	778	1	5	Disagree	1.291
17	I lose my interest when I encounter a trouble in English writing course.	780	1	5	Neutral	1.227
18	It feels like time passes fast in English writing course.	780	1	5	Disagree	1.115
19	I feel that in English writing courses I get skills I'll need in the future.	779	1	5	Neutral	1.148
20	I wouldn't attempt to learn English if the English writing course were not compulsory.	777	1	5	Disagree	1.291

21	I don't think that acquiring English writing skills will be useful in life.	779	1	5	Disagree	1.274
22	English writing course is unnecessary.	779	1	5	Disagree	1.197
23	I like learning new things in English writing course.	781	1	5	Agree	1.155
24	English writing course is among the courses I like most.	777	1	5	Neutral	1.131
25	I wouldn't like it to be compulsory to learn English writing.	774	1	5	Neutral	1.407
26	I would like to take more lessons to improve my English and writing skills	781	1	5	Neutral	1.292
27	I hate English writing lessons.	782	1	5	Disagree	1.244
28	I like studying English writing in my free times.	782	1	5	Disagree	1.146

When the students' attitudes are analyzed, it is seen that students have positive attitudes towards writing course. The participation levels of the students to the attitudinal sentences reveal that students see writing as an important course, and they believe it will be useful for them in their life and education. However, our results also reveal that they get bored in writing courses; additionally their reactions to the statements "I look forward to English writing skills course" and "I find it enjoyable to learn writing in English" show that they prefer other courses in terms of enjoyment. These results suggest that students have positive attitudes towards writing, however, writing courses are taught in a way which is not attractive to the students. Thus, their attitudes towards writing can be increased more through interesting classroom activities which will attract their attention more.

4.2.1. Attitudes with respect to gender before taking the course

Students' attitude scores towards writing before taking the course have been analyzed with respect to gender. To find out students' attitudes according to gender, number of female and male participants computed, and their participation levels were compared using Mann Whitney-U test. Table 4.2 below shows the results of the attitudes of female and male participants.

Table 4.12. The results of Mann Whitney-U test with respect to the gender variant

Variants	n	Rank Avarage	Rank Total	U	p
Female	400	411.23	164492.00	68108.000	0.01*
Male	381	396.76.	140879.00		

* $p < 0.05$

Analysis results in Table 4.2 show that the attitudes of students before taking English writing course differed significantly with respect to their gender ($U = 68108.000$; $p < 0.05$). The rank average shows that female students had higher attitude scores regarding the writing course before taking the course compared to male students.

4.2.2. Attitudes with respect to age before taking the course

In order to analyze the attitudes of the participants according to their age, Kruskal-Wallis-H test was used in the study. Table 4.3 below shows how age variant affects the attitudes of the participants towards the writing course in the pre-test.

Table 4.3. Results of Kruskal Wallis-H test with respect to the age variant

	Variants	n	Rank Average	sd	χ^2	p
Age	17	16	288.16	6	5.213	0.517
	18	301	401.32			
	19	270	384.41			
	20	132	376.08			
	21	44	397.00			
	22	10	411.65			
	Other	4	457.00			

Analysis results in Table 4.3 shows that the attitudes of students towards English writing course before taking the course did not differ significantly with respect to their age ($\chi^2_{(sd=6, n=777)} = 5.21; p > 0.05$). However, when their attitudes are analyzed based on age differences, it is seen that the older students (e.g. 22 and over) have higher attitude scores than the younger ones. Yong (2010) conducted a study on attitudes toward academic writing and investigated the participants' attitudes towards writing based on gender. Findings of that study suggest that older students were more aware of the importance of writing, and they had higher attitudes towards writing than the younger ones which also support our findings.

4.2.3. Attitudes with respect to the participants' departments before taking the course

The participants in the study were from different departments, and we investigated how their departments affect their attitudes before taking the writing course. For the analysis, Kruskal-Wallis-H test was used, and Table 4.4 below shows the attitudes of the participants based on their departments.

Table 4.4. Results of Kruskal-Wallis-H test with respect to the department variant

	Variants	n	Rank Average	sd	X	p
Department	Economics	174	343.62	8	20.004	0.01*
	Business Administration	171	328.22			
	Public Administration	144	336.76			
	Medicine	58	342.18			
	Biology	43	355.22			
	Environmental	23	342.63			
	Engineering					
	Civil Engineering	17	352.53			
	School of Tourism	53	335.73			
	Other	93	360.16			

* p<0.05

Analysis results in Table 4.4 show that the attitudes of students towards English writing course before taking the course differed significantly with respect to their department ($\chi^2_{(sd=8, n=776)} = 20; p<0.05$) This finding suggests that their departments have different effects on the attitudes of students towards English writing course before taking the course. When the rank averages of groups are considered, it is seen that the students in Business Administration Department had lower attitude scores regarding the writing course before taking the course compared to other groups. On the other hand, students from the Department of Biology had the highest attitude scores.

4.2.4. Attitudes with respect to the participants' education type before taking the course

The participants in our study attended preparatory classes both in day time and in the evening. Thus, their attitude scores based on their education type were analyzed, and Table 4.5 below shows how their attitudes differ according to their education type.

Table 4.5. Results of Mann Whitney-U test with respect to the education type variant

	Variants	n	Rank Average	Rank Total	U	P
Education Type	Day Education	397	403.41	160154.50	71296.500	0.118
	Evening Education	384	378.17	145216.50		

Analysis results in Table 4.5 show that the attitudes of students towards the writing course before taking the course did not differ significantly with respect to their education type ($U = 71296.500$; $p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that their type of education has no influence on the attitude scores of students regarding the writing course before taking the course. However, although they have positive attitudes towards writing based on their education type, the participants attending the preparatory classes in the evening have less attitude scores when compared the participants who have day education.

4.2.5. Attitudes with respect to the participants' preparatory class before taking the course

English Preparatory Education is compulsory for the students whose medium of instruction in their departments is English. However, students whose medium of instruction is not English have the opportunity to have English education for an academic year as elective. In our study, we analyzed the participants' attitude scores based on their preparatory class variant and the results are shown in Table 4.6 below.

Table 4.6. Results of Mann Whitney-U test with respect to the preparatory class variant

	Variants	n	Rank Aver.	Rank Total	U	P
Preparatory Class	Compulsory	697	382.55	266638.50	23385.500	0.003*
	Elective	84	461.10	38732.50		

* $p < 0.05$

Analysis results in Table 4.6 show that the attitudes of students towards the writing course before taking the course differed significantly with respect to their preparatory class states ($U = 23385.500$; $p < 0.05$). When the rank averages of groups are considered, it is seen that the students studying in elective preparatory class had higher

attitude scores regarding the writing course before taking the course compared to students who are having compulsory preparatory class.

4.2.6. Attitudes with respect to the participants' level of English before taking the course

Students' level of English is determined based on their scores in the placement test which they take just before the academic year starts. In order to find out how their attitudes varied according to their level of English, their attitude results were analyzed and Table 4.7 shows the participants' attitudes based on their level of English towards the writing course before they take it.

Table 4.7. Results of Kruskal Wallis-H test with respect to the level of English

	Variants	n	Rank Average	sd	X	p
Level of English	Pre-Intermediate	655	388.66	2	0.636	0.728
	Intermediate	88	406.38			
	Upper-Intermediate	39	405.55			

Analysis results in Table 4.7 show that the attitudes of students towards the writing course before taking the course did not differ significantly with respect to their level of English ($\chi^2_{(sd=2, n=782)} = 0.636; p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that their level of English has no influence on the attitude scores of students regarding English writing course before taking the course. On the other hand, all the participants have positive attitudes towards writing, and intermediate level students have the highest attitude scores while the students whose level of English is in pre-intermediate level have the lowest.

4.3. PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF THE STUDENTS TOWARDS THE WRITING COURSE AFTER THEY TAKE THE COURSE

Our second research question was “*What are the perceptions and attitudes of the students towards the writing course after they take it?*” The data gathered were analyzed to find out what their attitudes towards the writing was after taking it, and Table 4.8 below shows the participants' attitudes. To find out their attitudes after

writing course, the number of the participants reacting to each item, their participation levels and standard deviation have been analyzed. Students' participation levels have been computed based on positive and negative statements separately.

Table 4.8. Reactions students give to attitude statements after taking English writing course

	Attitude Scale	N	Min	Max	Participation Level	Sd
1	I want to improve my writing skill in English as much as possible.	780	1	5	Strongly Agree	1.162
2	English writing is one of the significant language skills.	777	1	5	Agree	1.176
3	I feel nervous and unhappy in English writing course.	779	1	5	Neutral	1.238
4	I am not interested in improving my English writing skill.	767	1	5	Disagree	1.181
5	I find it enjoyable to learn writing in English.	763	1	5	Neutral	1.231
6	I would like the weekly hours of English writing skills course to be reduced.	771	1	5	Disagree	1.202
7	I would like to deal with something else rather than trying to learn English writing skills.	777	1	5	Disagree	1.207
8	I am interested in learning about different languages and cultures in English writing course.	772	1	5	Agree	1.233
9	I believe learning writing in English will be useful for me all my life.	777	1	5	Agree	1.200
10	I look forward to English writing skills course.	769	1	5	Disagree	1.088
11	In English writing course, I lose my interest when I forget the words or phrases I have learned.	778	1	5	Neutral	1.236

12	I feel uneasy when I have to write about something in English.	777	1	5	Neutral	1.261
13	I think it is meaningless to try to communicate in writing in English.	773	1	5	Disagree	1.206
14	It widens one's perspective to learn writing in English.	771	1	5	Agree	1.239
15	I would like to have a pen pal with whom I could correspond in English.	768	1	5	Agree	1.274
16	I wouldn't think to have a job in the future which would require my corresponding in writing in English.	776	1	5	Disagree	1.268
17	I lose my interest when I encounter a trouble in English writing course.	777	1	5	Neutral	1.249
18	It feels like time passes fast in English writing course.	776	1	5	Neutral	1.212
19	I feel that in English writing courses I get skills I'll need in the future.	772	1	5	Neutral	1.144
20	I wouldn't attempt to learn English if the English writing course were not compulsory.	778	1	5	Disagree	1.275
21	I don't think that acquiring English writing skills will be useful in life.	776	1	5	Disagree	1.272
22	English writing course is unnecessary.	765	1	5	Disagree	1.235
23	I like learning new things in English writing course.	775	1	5	Agree	1.157
24	English writing course is among the courses I like most.	773	1	5	Neutral	1.225
25	I wouldn't like it to be compulsory to learn English writing.	774	1	5	Neutral	1.390
26	I would like to take more lessons to improve my English and writing skills	778	1	5	Neutral	1.251
27	I hate English writing lessons.	777	1	5	Disagree	1.279

28	I like studying English writing in my free times.	780	1	5	Neutral	1.221
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Students' attitudes scores show that they had positive attitudes towards writing course after they took the writing course. When their participation levels are analyzed, it is seen that writing is an important skill for them which they believe they will need in their future life. When responses to the positive statements are analyzed, the most striking results are; students strongly agree that they want to improve their writing skill in English as much as possible. On the other hand, they disagree that they look forward to English writing course. Although this seems contradictory, we can point out that they are aware of the importance of writing skill but writing courses are not instructed in an attractive way for them. However, negative statements do not contradict with the positive ones. Students' participation levels to negative statements are "disagree" and "neutral" which in turn suggest they have positive attitudes. Compared to pre-test results, students' attitudes towards writing decreased in the post-test, but this is not statistically significant. According to Plata (2008:357), a negative attitude toward writing may not be unusual because "few people are skilled enough for writing, and even many people do not like writing very much".

The attitudes of students towards the writing course after taking the course, their differences with respect to gender, age, department, education type, preparatory class and level of English have been analyzed and the results have been shown below.

4.3.1 Attitudes with respect to gender after taking the course

Students' attitude scores towards writing course after taking it have been analyzed with respect to gender. To find out students' attitudes according to gender, the number of female and male participants were computed, and their rank averages were compared using Mann Whitney-U test. Table 4.9 shows the results of the attitudes of female and male participants.

Table 4.9. Results of Mann Whitney-U test with respect to the gender variant

	Variant	n	Rank Average	Rank Total	U	p
Gender	Female	400	378.27	151309.00	71109.000	0.106
	Male	381	404.36	154062.00		

Analysis results in Table 4.9 show that the attitudes of students after taking the writing course did not differ significantly with respect to their gender ($U = 71109.000$; $p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that gender has no influence on the attitudes of students regarding the writing course after taking the course. When their attitude scores towards writing are analyzed, it is seen that the male students' attitudes are higher than those of the female ones.

4.3.2. Attitudes with respect to age after taking the course

In order to analyze the attitudes of the participants according to their age, Kruskal-Wallis-H test was used in the study. Table 4.10 below shows how age variant affects the attitudes of the participants towards the writing course in the post-test.

Analysis results in Table 4.10 show that the attitudes of students towards the writing course after taking the course did not differ significantly with respect to their age ($\chi^2_{(sd=6, n=777)} = 6.871$; $p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that age has no influence on the attitudes of students regarding the writing course after taking the course.

Table 4.10. Results of Kruskal Wallis-H test with respect to the age variant

	Variants	n	Rank Average	sd	χ^2	p
Age	17	16	423.81	6	6.871	0.333
	18	301	395.33			
	19	270	370.76			
	20	132	381.54			
	21	44	445.75			
	22	10	439.35			
	Other	4	501.13			

Graham, Berninger and Fan (2007) conducted a study on writing attitude and writing achievement, and in their study, they also analyzed the age factor in writing attitudes. Their study showed that there was no statistical difference in younger and older students' attitude towards writing. Our study also shows that there is no statistically significant difference in students' attitudes with respect to their age according to both the pre-test and post-test results. On the other hand, Celaya and Naves (cited in Manchon, 2009:148) report that "in view of the results, it could be concluded that our studies found that older learners significantly outperformed the younger learners in their attitudes towards EFL writing programs". Although there are studies which yield contradictory results on age factor, the findings in our study overlaps with the studies in that age has no influence on students' attitudes towards writing, however when the age group between 17-22 is considered, older students have more positive scores towards the writing course.

When the results are analyzed, it is worth noting here that the highest attitude scores to writing vary within age groups in a non-homogeneous way. Although older students showed higher attitude scores before writing the course, results show that the youngest age variant in our study (17) also revealed more positive attitude scores after taking the writing course. In general, both before and after taking the course, higher attitude scores belonged to the older students. However, their attitudes do not differ in a statistically significant way.

4.3.3. Attitudes with respect to department after taking the course

The participants in the study were from different departments, and we investigated how their departments affect their attitudes after taking the writing course. For the analysis, Kruskal-Wallis-H test was used, and Table 4.11 below shows the attitudes of the participants based on their departments.

Table 4.11. Results of Kruskal-Wallis-H test with respect to the department variant

Variants		n	Rank Average	sd	X	p
Department	Economics	174	386.79	8	8.610	0.376
	Business Administration	171	381.42			
	Public Administration	144	354.87			
	Medicine	58	420.18			
	Biology	43	364.44			
	Environmental Engineering	23	417.13			
	Civil Engineering	17	406.82			
	School of Tourism	53	430.44			
	Other	93	413.81			

Analysis results in Table 4.11 show that the attitudes of students towards the writing course after taking the course did not differ significantly with respect to their department ($\chi^2_{(sd=8, n=776)} = 8.610$; $p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that their departments have no influence on the attitude scores of students towards the writing course after taking the course. The participants from the Department of Medicine and Environmental Engineering have the highest scores in their attitudes towards writing; students from the Department of Biology have the lowest attitude scores.

4.3.4. Attitudes with respect to education type after taking the course

The participants in the students were analyzed in terms of their attitudes according to their education type. For the analysis, Mann Whitney-U test was used to find out the results. Their rank averages were computed and the results are shown in Table 4.12.

Table 4.12. Results of Mann Whitney-U test with respect to the education type variant

Variants		n	Rank Average	Rank Total	U	p
Education Type	Day Education	397	399.60	158643.00	72808.000	0.278
	Evening Education	384	382.10	146728.50		

Analysis results in Table 4.12 show that the attitudes of students towards the writing course after taking the course did not differ significantly with respect to their education type ($U = 72808.000$; $p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that their type of education has no influence on the attitude scores of students regarding the writing course after taking the course. When the data obtained are considered, it is seen that students who have day education have higher attitude scores than the evening class students. Additionally, students' attitude scores before taking the writing course were also similar in terms of their education type. Both before and after taking the course, evening class students showed lower attitude scores than the ones who have day education.

4.3.5. Attitudes with respect to preparatory class after taking the course

In order to analyze the attitudes of the participants according to their preparatory class type, Mann Whitney-U Test was used in the study. Table 4.13 below shows how Preparatory Class variant affects the attitudes of the participants towards the writing course in the post-test.

Table 4.13. Results of Mann Whitney-U test with respect to the preparatory class variant

Variants		n	Rank Aver.	Rank Total	U	p
Preparatory Class	Compulsory	697	389.19	271266.50	28013.500	0.519
	Elective	84	406.01	34104.50		

Analysis results in Table 4.13 show that the attitudes of students towards the writing course after taking the course did not differ significantly with respect to their preparatory class being obligatory or elective ($U = 28013.500$; $p > 0.05$). This finding suggests that their state of preparatory class has no influence on the attitude scores of students regarding the writing course after taking the course. Results show that students who have elective English preparatory education have higher attitude scores when compared to the students who have obligatory preparatory education.

4.3.6. Attitudes with respect to level of English after taking the course

In order to find out how their attitudes varied according to their level of English, their attitude results were analyzed using Kruskal Wallis-H and Table 4.14 shows the participants' attitudes based on their level of English towards the writing course after they took it.

Table 4.14. Results of Kruskal Wallis-H test with respect to the level of English

	Variants	n	Rank Average	sd	X	p
Level of English	Pre-Intermediate	655	392.77	2	3.847	0.146
	Intermediate	88	410.70			
	Upper-Intermediate	39	326.91			

Analysis results in Table 4.14 show that the attitudes of students towards the writing course after taking the course did not differ significantly with respect to their level of English ($\chi^2_{(sd=2, n=782)} = 3.847; p>0.05$). This finding suggests that their level of English has no influence on the attitude scores of students regarding the writing course after taking the course. On the other hand, all the participants have positive attitudes towards writing, and intermediate level students have the highest attitude scores while the students whose level of English is in upper-intermediate level have the lowest.

4.4. DIFFERENCE IN THE ATTITUDE SCORES OF THE STUDENTS IN SAMPLE GROUP TOWARDS ENGLISH WRITING COURSE BEFORE AND AFTER TAKING THE COURSE

Our third research question was “*To what extent do the perceptions and attitudes of the students change towards the writing course during the time they take writing course?*” Below in Table 4.15 are the results of Wilcoxon signed rank test, which was made to find out whether the attitude scores of students showed a significant difference before and after taking English writing course.

Table 4.15. Wilcoxon signed rank test results of attitude scores before and after English Writing Course

Final Test-Pre Test	n	Rank Aver.	Rank Total	Z	p
Negative Rank	450	404.20	181891.00	5.349*	0.000
Positive Rank	321	360.48	115715.00		
Equal	12				

* Based on negative rank principal

Our results show that there is a significant difference between the attitude scores of students before and after taking the English writing course ($z=5.349$, $p<0.05$). When the rank average and total of difference scores are considered, it is seen that post-test results are in favor of the negative rank when compared to pre-test results. These results show that having taken English writing course had no influence on improving the attitudes of students towards this course. Although the students take the course for a whole term, their attitudes towards the writing course do not increase in a positive way. The changes in the students' attitudes between pre-test and post-test are given in the Table 4.16 below.

Table 4.16. The differences in students' attitudes between pre-test and post-test

	Attitude Scale	N	Pre-Test Average	Post Test Average
1	I want to improve my writing skill in English as much as possible.	780	Strongly Agree	Strongly Agree
2	English writing is one of the significant language skills.	777	Agree	Agree
3	I feel nervous and unhappy in English writing course.	779	Neutral	Neutral
4	I am not interested in improving my English writing skill.	767	Disagree	Disagree
5	I find it enjoyable to learn writing in English.	763	Neutral	Neutral
6	I would like the weekly hours of English writing skills course to be reduced.	771	Disagree	Disagree

7	I would like to deal with something else rather than trying to learn English writing skills.	777	Disagree	Disagree
8	I am interested in learning about different languages and cultures in English writing course.	772	Agree	Agree
9	I believe learning writing in English will be useful for me all my life.	777	Strongly Agree	Agree
10	I look forward to English writing skills course.	769	Disagree	Disagree
11	In English writing course, I lose my interest when I forget the words or phrases I have learned.	778	Agree	Neutral
12	I feel uneasy when I have to write about something in English.	777	Neutral	Neutral
13	I think it is meaningless to try to communicate in writing in English.	773	Disagree	Disagree
14	It widens one's perspective to learn writing in English.	771	Agree	Agree
15	I would like to have a pen pal with whom I could correspond in English.	768	Agree	Agree
16	I wouldn't think to have a job in the future which would require my corresponding in writing in English.	776	Disagree	Disagree
17	I lose my interest when I encounter a trouble in English writing course.	777	Neutral	Neutral
18	It feels like time passes fast in English writing course.	776	Disagree	Neutral
19	I feel that in English writing courses I get skills I'll need in the future.	772	Neutral	Neutral
20	I wouldn't attempt to learn English if the English writing course were not compulsory.	778	Disagree	Disagree

21	I don't think that acquiring English writing skills will be useful in life.	776	Disagree	Disagree
22	English writing course is unnecessary.	765	Disagree	Disagree
23	I like learning new things in English writing course.	775	Agree	Agree
24	English writing course is among the courses I like most.	773	Neutral	Neutral
25	I wouldn't like it to be compulsory to learn English writing.	774	Neutral	Neutral
26	I would like to take more lessons to improve my English and writing skills	778	Neutral	Neutral
27	I hate English writing lessons.	777	Disagree	Disagree
28	I like studying English writing in my free times.	780	Disagree	Neutral

Students' attitude scores both before and after taking course are positive. Although the difference between pre- and post-test is not statistically significant, the students' attitudes decreased to some extent in the post-test. In the following items students have developed better attitude toward the writing course:

The most significant change in their attitudes between pre- and post-test occurred in their reaction to the negative statement "In English writing course, I lose my interest when I forget the words or phrases I have learned". However, the reaction to this statement changed in a positive way in the post test. Before taking the course, the students' participation level to this statement was "Agree", which is a negative attitude for negative statements, it turned out as "Neutral" in the post-test.

Reaction to the positive statement "It feels like time passes fast in English writing course" changed between pre- and post-test. Before the participants took the course, their reaction to this statement was "Disagree", but it turned out to be "Neutral" after taking the course.

The final change in their reaction to the statements occurred in the statement “I like studying English writing in my free times”. The change between pre- and post- tests was in a positive way. Before they take the course, their reaction was “Disagree”, but their reaction became “Neutral”.

However, the most striking change occurred in their reactions to statement “I believe learning writing in English will be useful for me all my life.” Their reaction to this positive statement before taking the course was “strongly agree” however, the post-test results show that they agree with this statement as “agree” level. They still believe that writing in English will be useful but not as much as their reaction in the pre-test.

It is worth noting here that when the participation level responses are considered, there seems to be a positive change in students’ attitudes between pre- and post- test results. However, the statistical analysis results show that the pre-test averages were higher than the post-test averages. For example, when we look at the most striking items, the pre-test average for the first statement “I want to improve my writing skill in English as much as possible” was 4.27, but in the post-test average, it was 4.17, where there was a slight decrease in the average scores. This is true for almost all of the statements except for the Items

Studies conducted on writing attitudes reveal conflicting results. Some studies (Buhrke, Henkels, Klene, and Pfister, 2002, Gau, Hermanson, Logar and Smerek, 2003) suggest that students’ writing attitudes increase within the course duration. On the other hand, Petric (2002:17) mentions in her study on writing attitudes:

“a positive attitude does not automatically turn into behavior because of students’ perceived lack of control over the situation due to pressing factors such as examinations and other external factors; however, factors may be internal, that is, if a student perceives her language proficiency inadequate, she may not develop a positive attitude within the course of time.”

4.5. THE PERCEPTIONS OF MALE AND FEMALE STUDENTS TOWARDS WRITING COURSE

Table 4.17 shows the attitudes of female and male students towards the writing

course both before and after taking the course. When their attitudes and perceptions were analyzed before they took the writing course, it is clearly seen that female students had higher attitude scores compared to male ones ($U = 68108.000$; $p < 0.05$). Although they take the course during the second term, the attitudes of female students showed no significant difference after they took the course, and the attitudes of both female and male students were nearly similar ($U = 71109.000$; $p > 0.05$).

Table 4.17 reveals that although the attitudes of females were higher in the pre-test, this situation turned in a negative way in the post-test. It is also true that attitudes of male students were less before the course, but they had higher attitudes after taking the course. As a result, it can be concluded that during the course, the positive attitudes of female students dropped significantly during the course and in general gender has no influence on the attitudes of students regarding English writing course after taking the course.

Table 4.17. The attitudes of female and male students towards the writing course both before and after taking the course

GENDER	N	ATTITUDES BEFORE TAKING THE COURSE				ATTITUDES AFTER TAKING THE COURSE			
		Rank Ave.	Rank Total	U	p	Rank Ave.	Rank Total	U	p
FEMALE	400	411.23	164492.00	68108.000	0.01	378.27	151309.00	71109.000	0.106
MALE	381	396.76	140879.00			404.36	154062.00		

Pajares, Miller and Johnson (1999) conducted a study on gender differences in attitudes towards writing. Their results revealed that girls were judged superior writers in the pre-test, but there were no gender differences in writing when the pre- and post-test results were compared. In our study, we also found similar results; female students had higher attitudes in the pre-test, however, in the post-test, their attitudes decreased and results showed that gender has no significance effect on attitudes based on the gender variation.

Additionally, Yong's (2010) study suggests that female students had positive scores in their attitudes towards writing, likewise, males also had similar attitudes

together with the female students. In her study, she concludes that although females seem to have higher attitude scores, males show similar attitudes just in a less manner. Yong's study also reveals similar results to our study.

Another study on how gender differences affect students' writing attitudes was conducted by Greene (1999). The study examined the relationships among self-efficacy for writing, self-efficacy for academic achievement, self-evaluative standards, verbal aptitude scores, grade goals, final course grades, and gender among university students in first-semester English composition classes. The results of the study indicated that gender was not significantly related to attitude in writing, which also shows similar results with our study.

4.6. THE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF THE STUDENTS TOWARDS WRITING COURSE ACCORDING TO STUDENTS' LEVEL OF ENGLISH

Our results in Table 4.18 show that the students' level of English was not a significant issue in their attitudes towards the writing course both before and after taking the course. When the pre-test results are analyzed, it is seen that intermediate level students had the highest attitude score towards writing. Upper-intermediate level students' attitudes were quite similar to that of intermediate level students; however, students whose level of English was in pre-intermediate level had the lowest attitude score towards the course. Post-test results reveal that upper-intermediate level students' attitude scores decreased from 405.38 to 326.91 although pre-intermediate and intermediate level students' attitude scores increased. When the pre-intermediate and intermediate level students finish the preparatory school at the end of the second term, they finish the program at upper-intermediate level. However, this situation does not provide an impact on students in a way to change their attitudes towards the course. Our results show that their level of English has no influence on the attitude scores of students regarding the writing course before and after taking the course. Their attitude score was ($\chi^2_{(sd=2, n=782)} = 0.636; p>0.05$) before the course and ($\chi^2_{(sd=2, n=782)} = 3.847; p>0.05$) after the course.

Table 4.18. The attitudes of students towards the writing course both before

Level of English	N	ATTITUDES BEFORE TAKING THE COURSE				ATTITUDES AFTER TAKING THE COURSE			
		rank average	sd	x	p	rank average	sd	x	p
Pre-intermediate	655	388.66	2	0.636	0.728	392.77	2	3.847	0.146
Intermediate	88	406.38				410.70			
Upper-Intermediate	39	405.55				326.91			

Marx's (1991:5) results, in his study in which he compared attitudes of the students from three different levels of English, show that in the developmental level students share similar attitudes with the advanced level students. Middle ability group students show negative attitudes towards writing. However Marx (1991:5) concludes that "a student's writing ability does not necessarily correlate directly with his/her attitudes towards writing". This study also supports our study in that students' level of English has no direct effect upon their attitudes towards writing.

4.7. THE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF THE STUDENTS TOWARDS WRITING COURSE ACCORDING TO STUDENTS' DEPARTMENTS

The departments were analyzed in terms of their effect on students' attitudes and the results are shown in Table 4.19. Before taking the course, it is seen that, the students in business administration department had lower attitude scores regarding English writing course before taking the course compared to other groups. However, our results show that the attitudes of students in all departments do not differ significantly after taking the course when their attitudes scores are analyzed ($\chi^2_{(sd=8, n=776)} = 8.610; p > 0.05$).

Table 4.19. The Perceptions and Attitudes of the Students towards Writing Course According to Students' Departments

Department	ATTITUDES BEFORE TAKING THE COURSE					ATTITUDES AFTER TAKING THE COURSE			
	n	rank average	sd	x	p	rank average	sd	x	p
Economics	174	343.62	8	20.004	0.01*	339.79	8	8.610	0.376
Business Administration	171	328.22				339.42			
Public Administration	144	336.76				331.87			
Medicine	58	342.18				348.18			
Biology	43	355.22				331.44			
Environmental Engineering	23	342.63				348.13			
Civil Engineering	17	352.53				346.82			
School of Tourism	53	335.73				345.44			
Other	93	360.16				346.81			

The students studying in the Business Administration and School of Tourism had lower attitudes, and biology department students had the highest scores on their attitudes before taking the writing course. After taking the course, the most striking change occurred in the students studying in School of Tourism whose attitudes were one of the lowest before the course, and they changed their attitudes in a more positive way from “neutral” to “agree” interval. This suggests that students studying in the School of Tourism changed their attitudes positively after they took the course. Additionally, students of Medicine also changed their attitudes in a very significant way, and they had the highest attitude scores together with the students in the Department of Environmental Engineering after taking the course. On the other hand, it is important to point out that the students of Biology had a considerable recession in their attitudes as they had higher attitude scores at the beginning; however their attitude scores decreased in a significant way after they took the course. We believe that it is because their achievement scores were very low compared to other department students.

4.8. THE PERCEPTIONS AND ATTITUDES OF STUDENTS TOWARDS WRITING COURSE ACCORDING TO THEIR SUCCESS IN WRITING

Table 4.20 below shows the mean average of students' attitudes according to pre-and pot-test results and their success rate in writing section of the proficiency exam.

While analyzing their percentages of success in writing, their scores in the proficiency exam results in writing was gathered. Those who had scores 75 and over out of 100 in the writing section of the proficiency exam was regarded as “successful” and the ones who had lower than 75 were considered unsuccessful.

Table 4.20. The Perceptions and Attitudes of Students towards Writing Course according to Their Success in Writing

Departments	Attitude mean (\bar{X})	Successful (%)	Unsuccessful (%)
Economics	341.70	44	56
Business Administration	333.82	45	55
Public Administration	334.31	53	47
Medicine	345.18	91	9
Biology	343.33	26	74
Environmental Engineering	345.38	39	61
Civil Engineering	349.67	53	47
School of Tourism	340.58	45	55
Other	353.48	64	36

Departments in the data collection instrument were listed as Economics, Business Administration, Public Administration, Medicine, Biology, Environmental Engineering, Civil Engineering, School of Tourism and other; thus, the change in the attitudes of students before and after they take the course and the relationship between their attitudes and their overall proficiency level in writing have been discussed.

The attitudes of students in the department of Economics (N=174) was $\bar{X} = 3.43$ before they took the writing course, and after they took the course their attitude scores were $\bar{X} = 3.39$. Their attitudes towards the writing were positive both before they took

the course and after taking it, however when the attitude change within is analyzed, it is seen that their attitude score dropped but not in a significant way. When their success level is analyzed, it is seen that 44% of them were successful and 56% failed in the proficiency test. As a result, it can be concluded that although students in the department of Economics have positive attitudes towards the writing course, more than half of them were not successful in the course.

When the attitudes of students studying in the department of Business Administration (N=171) are analyzed, it is seen that their attitude score before they took the course was $\bar{X} = 3.28$, and it increased to $\bar{X} = 3.39$ after they took the course. As with the students of Economics department, students studying in the department of Business Administration had also positive attitude scores both before and after they took the writing course. However, their proficiency scores for writing in the exam show that although they had positive attitudes towards the writing course, 45 % of them were successful in the writing section, and the rest, 55 %, failed in the exam which suggests that more than half of the students failed in the proficiency exam in spite of having positive attitudes towards the writing course.

The attitude score of students studying in the department of Public Administration (N=144) was $\bar{X} = 3.36$ before they took the writing course, and their attitude scores dropped in an insignificant way ($\bar{X} = 3.31$) after they took the course which was still positive. Their attitudes towards the writing were positive both before they took the course and after taking it. Different from the departments of Economics and Business Administration, students of Public Administration Department had positive attitudes towards the writing course and more than half of them were also successful in the writing course. When their success level is analyzed, it is seen that 53% of them were successful and 47% failed. As a result, it can be concluded that students in the department of Public Administration have positive attitudes towards the writing course and more than half of them are successful in the course.

When the attitudes of students studying in the department of Medicine (N=171) is analyzed, it is seen that their attitude score before they took the course was $\bar{X} = 3.42$, and it increased to $\bar{X} = 3.48$ after they took the course. Students studying in the

department of Medicine had positive attitude scores both before and after they took the writing course. Additionally, their proficiency scores for writing in the exam show that students in the department of Medicine had the highest success in the writing course, that is, they had positive attitudes towards the writing course, 91% of them were successful in writing section, and the rest, 9% of them failed in the exam which suggests that a great majority of the students was successful and very few of them, 9%, failed in the proficiency exam. As a result, we can conclude that there is a direct relationship between the attitudes of students in the Department of Medicine and their success level.

The analysis of attitude score of students in the department of Biology (N=43) shows that their attitudes towards the writing course was $\bar{X} = 3.55$ before they took the writing course, and after they took the course their attitude scores decreased as $\bar{X} = 3.31$. Their attitudes towards the writing were positive both before they took the course and after taking it, however when the attitude change within is analyzed, it is seen that their attitude score dropped but not in a significant way. When their success level is taken into consideration, it is seen that only 26% of them were successful and majority of them, 74%, failed. As a result, it can be concluded that although students in the department of Biology have positive attitudes towards the writing course, very few of them were successful in the course which suggests that there is not a direct relationship between their attitudes and overall proficiency in the writing course.

The attitude score of students in the department of Environmental Engineering (N=23) was $\bar{X} = 3.42$ before they took the writing course and after they took the course their attitude scores were $\bar{X} = 3.48$. Their attitudes towards writing were positive both before they took the course and after taking it, and when the attitude change is analyzed, it is seen that their attitude score increased in an insignificant way. When their success level is analyzed, it is seen that 39 % of them were successful and 61 % of them failed. As a result, it can be said that although students in the department of Environmental Engineering have positive attitudes towards the writing course, more than half of them were not successful in the course.

According to the results obtained from the study, the analysis of attitude score of students in the department of Civil Engineering (N=17) shows that their attitudes

towards the writing course was $\bar{X} = 3, 52$ before they took the writing course and after they took the course their attitude scores decreased as $\bar{X} = 3, 46$. Their attitudes towards the writing were positive both before they took the course and after taking it, however when the attitude change within is analyzed, it is seen that their attitude score dropped but not in a significant way. When their success level is taken into consideration, it is seen that nearly more than a half of the students, 53 %, were successful and less than half of them, 47 %, failed. As a result, it can be concluded that students in the department of Civil Engineering have positive attitudes towards the writing course, and more than half of them were successful in the course which suggests that there may be a direct relationship between their attitudes and overall proficiency in the writing course.

When the attitudes of students studying in the department of School of Tourism (N=53) are analyzed, the results show that their attitude scores before they took the course were $\bar{X}=3.35$ and it increased to $\bar{X}=3.45$ after they took the course. Students studying in the School of Tourism had positive attitude scores both before and after they took the writing course. When their success level is taken into consideration, it is seen that less than a half of the students, 45%, were successful and more than half of them, 55%, failed in the proficiency exam based on their writing scores. As a result, we can conclude that although students studying in the School of Tourism had positive attitudes towards the writing both at the beginning and at the end of the second term, their success score in writing was low.

When the attitude scores of the students studying in other departments (Department of International Trading and Finance, Department of Machinery Engineering, Department of Geology Engineering, Department of Electrical and Electronics Engineering, Department of Food Engineering, Department of Textile Engineering, Department of Computer Engineering, and Department of Industrial Engineering; N=93) are analyzed, it is seen that their attitude scores before taking the writing course was = 3.60. After they took the course, their attitude level decreased to =3.46, which is not a significant change. Students analyzed under the category of “other” had positive attitudes both before and after taking the course, however, the attitudes of these students decreased in an insignificant way. Additionally, we can assume that there may be a direct relationship between their attitudes and success in the

writing course as 64% of them were successful although 36% failed. As a result, these students had positive attitudes and more than half of them were successful in the writing course.

As a conclusion, the average attitude scores based on pre- and post-test results show that students' attitude score was 3.42 and average success rate in writing section in all departments was 51 % and failure rate was 49%. Thus, we can conclude that there is a relationship between the students' overall attitudes towards writing and their writing performance.

Our results are supported by a number of studies stating that there is a direct link between attitude and success, and one of them was conducted by Powell (1984) . The results of the study indicated that there is a relationship between (1) attitude and writing performance and (2) grade point average and writing performance. Gardner and Lambert (1972) also point out that learner's attitudes are believed to affect his success in language learning considerably because motivation to learn the second language, thus writing in our context, is determined by attitudes. Thus they claim that social-psychological factors (attitudes) relate strongly to achievement in L2 learning. Additionally, Dörnyei (2003) emphasized that high motivation and success has been widely accepted by both teachers and researchers as a key factor in rate and success of second language or foreign language learning. Gallick and Sheryl (1997:71) also share similar findings which indicate that after completing an action research project based on process approach to writing on students, the researchers concluded that "students demonstrated a 100 percent increase in positive attitudes towards writing" and their pre- and post-test results showed an increase in their success in writing.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

5.1. INTRODUCTION

This part includes the conclusion which depends on the overview of the study and includes the conclusions related with the study. Then, pedagogical implications of the study for teachers are presented. The chapter ends with the prospects for further research that offers some possible suggestions for the related studies that can be conducted in future.

5.2. OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

As stated before, this study aims to find out students' attitudes towards the writing course at Pamukkale University and how do the students' attitudes change in the pre-test before and in the post-test after they take the writing course. In addition, the study aims to investigate the correlation between students' attitudes and their overall performance in writing based on the proficiency exam results.

This study was designed as a descriptive study and in order to collect the data, students were administered a questionnaire in the pre-and post-test. Results were analyzed through quantitative data analysis. In the analysis of the data, four main analysis techniques were used: (1) Kolmogorov-Smirnov test to assess the distribution of data, (2) Mann Whitney U-Test to see whether the scores obtained from two unrelated samples showed a significant difference from each other or not, (3) Kruskal Wallis H-Test to find out whether the sample average of two or more unrelated samples showed significant difference from each other or not, and (4) Wilcoxon signed-rank test to test the significance of the difference of the scores belonging to related two

assessment sets. Apart from these techniques, students' writing scores in the proficiency exam were collected and their level of success was calculated; for this aim, the success level for each student was calculated as 75 marks out of 100; that is, those who got under 75 were accepted unsuccessful and those over 75 marks were accepted as successful in writing. Then, their attitude scores and writing scores were compared. As a result of the analyses, the following conclusions can be drawn.

5.3. CONCLUSIONS

Our data reveal that the students had positive attitudes towards the writing before taking the course. In the pre-test, gender variant showed that female students had better attitude scores towards the writing course compared to the males. When the age variant is considered, there was not a statistically significant difference in the attitude scores based on the age variant but the older students' attitudes were higher than the younger ones in the pre-test. As another variant, attitudes of students towards English writing course before taking the course differ significantly with respect to their department.

In addition, the students in the Business Administration department had lower attitude scores regarding English writing course before taking the course compared to other departments. The students who attend day classes have higher attitude scores compared to the ones who have night classes, but their type of education has no influence on the attitude scores of students regarding English writing course before taking the course. Another variant in the study was preparatory class type as obligatory and elective. The attitudes of students towards English writing course in the pre-test differed significantly with respect to their preparatory class types and students who have elective preparatory education have higher attitude scores. Students' level of English has no influence on the attitude scores of students regarding English writing course before taking the course, but the rank averages show that pre-intermediate level students' attitudes were lower than the intermediate and upper-intermediate level students.

A majority of students (interval= 4.27) see writing as an important skill, and they value it. It is also seen that they want to improve their writing skills as much as possible.

Students think that learning to write in English will be useful for them throughout their lives.

When the attitude scores of students are analyzed, it is seen that the students had positive attitudes towards the writing after taking the course. In the post-test, gender variant in the pre-test showed that male students had better attitude scores towards the writing course compared the females. When the age variant is considered, there was not a statistically significant difference in the attitude scores based on the age variant but the older students' attitudes were higher than the younger ones in the post-test. In contrast to pre-test results, the attitudes of students towards English writing course after taking the course did not differ significantly with respect to their department in the post-test. The students who attend day classes have higher attitude scores compared to the ones who have night classes, and their type of education has no influence on the attitude scores of students regarding English writing course after taking the course.

Another variant in the study was preparatory class type as obligatory and elective. The attitudes of students towards English writing course in the post-test did not differ significantly with respect to their preparatory class types and students who have elective preparatory education have higher attitude scores. Students' level of English has no influence on the attitude scores of students regarding English writing course after taking the course, but the rank averages show that upper-intermediate level students' attitudes were lower than the pre-intermediate and intermediate level students.

The post-test results show that students' attitudes towards the writing course were still positive, however after taking the course, their attitude scores decreased but this was not statistically significant. Reactions to the same attitudinal statements decreased in almost all of the items. When the attitudes are considered based on the departments, it is seen that the attitude score of students in the department of Economics (N=174) was higher before they took the writing course, and after they took the course their attitude scores decreased. When the department of Business Administration (N=171) is analyzed, it is seen that their attitude score before they took the course was lower, but it increased slightly after they took the course. The attitudes of students studying in the department of Public Administration (N=144) were higher before they took the writing course, but their attitude scores dropped in an insignificant way in the

post test; however their attitudes were still positive. When the attitudes of students studying in the department of Medicine (N=171) is analyzed, it is seen that their attitude score before they took the course was lower when compared to post-test results. The analysis of attitude score of students in the department of Biology (N=43) shows that their attitudes towards the writing course were higher in the pre-test, and their attitudes decreased in the post-test. The attitude score of students in the department of Environmental Engineering (N=23) increased in a positive way between pre- and post-test. However, according to the results obtained from the study, the analysis of attitude score of students in the department of Civil Engineering (N=17) shows that their attitudes towards the writing course decreased in a negative way in the post-test when compared to pre-test results. The attitudes of students studying in the department of School of Tourism (N=53) are analyzed, and the results show that their attitude scores increased in a positive way within pre- and post-test results.

When the students' attitudes towards writing and their writing scores in the proficiency exam are analyzed, it is seen that students have positive attitudes both before and after taking the course. 51% of the students were successful in writing in the proficiency exam and when their attitude scores are considered, it is seen that positive attitudes have a positive effect on students' proficiency in writing. We found surprising results as for the attitude-success relationship. For example, although students in the department of Economics have positive attitudes towards the writing course, more than half of them were not successful in the course. On the other hand, students in the department of Public Administration have positive attitudes towards the writing course and more than half of them are successful in the course. One of the most striking example is seen in the department of Medicine; students in the department of Medicine had the highest success in the writing course, that is, they had positive attitudes towards the writing course, and 91 % of them were successful in writing and the rest, 9 %, failed in the exam which suggests that a great majority of the students was successful and very few of them, 9 %, failed in the proficiency exam. Statistically, it is seen that students who have positive attitudes have higher proficiency rates in the writing course.

5.4. IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The results of the study reveal that students had positive attitudes towards writing when they came to School of Foreign Languages and they agreed that writing skill was necessary for them in their academic and future life. Sustainability of this attitude depends on the instruction of writing course, materials used in the class, content of the course and the exams.

The results also imply that students are partly content with the writing program in the School of Foreign Languages. However, it is a fact that these students have the academic writing course for the first time in their life, and it is worth noting here that they are even inexperienced in L1 writing as the studies (Kuvanç, 2008, Nohl and Sayılan, 2004) suggest.

In order for the students to continue the positive attitude towards writing, teachers should be aware of their attitude. They should increase the number of the tasks so that students will be busy with different topics in different genres. Additionally, they need to be provided models and encouraged to practice their writing skill more as part of their learning process. The results also imply that students are bored in the writing course and the content does not attract their attention at the desired level based on the syllabus. Thus, the teachers should give the writing instruction in an attractive way so that they follow the course content in pleasure, and feel eager to participate in and out of the class. In addition, students should be grouped according to their departments because their success and learning phase change significantly depending on their department.

When attitudes scores in the pre- and post-test results are analyzed, it is seen that the pre-intermediate level students increased their attitude in the post-test. It also shows that the more they write, the better they will be in this skill. Thus, teachers should give them opportunities to express themselves more through communicative writing tasks that fit real life situations. Another implication of the study is that writing can be reviewed again to increase the number of class hours in writing, and teachers can also encourage them to have pen-pal to write in English for the purpose of real communication.

In order to make students more aware of the fact that they need writing skills in their academic life after preparatory class, students can be given brief introductions by the head of the departments before they begin their academic year in the preparatory classes. As they start their education life in the preparatory classes for the first time in the university, most of the students do not have adequate information about the course requirements in their own departments, so teachers should arrange meetings and acknowledge them why they need language skills, and emphasize the necessity of writing skill.

As a key factor in the teaching/learning process in and out of the class, the instructors can get information about the students' attitudes and perceptions, and may help them to improve positive attitudes towards writing skills through various tasks and constructive feedback. Thanks to achievable tasks that teachers provide, students will be aware that they can achieve them by spending necessary effort, which will also lead them to build self-confidence and higher attitude.

5.5. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

This study was conducted in an EFL setting with 655 pre-intermediate, 88 intermediate and 39 upper-intermediate students in the School of Foreign Languages at Pamukkale University in Turkey. For that reason, findings of the study cannot be generalized for all the foreign language learners. The study aimed at finding out the attitudes and perceptions of the learners towards the writing course, so generalization was not the main concern. Nevertheless, it is the first study about attitudes towards the writing course in the School of Foreign Languages at Pamukkale University, and it might help improving the preparatory class program in view of writing and shaping the curriculum. It would be really helpful if a replication of this study could be made with larger and more diverse samples from different universities in the country.

As this study tried to find out the attitudes and perceptions of the students only, the instructors' attitudes towards writing can also be made in order to better understand how students attitude change in the writing course.

There are many factors contributing to the change in the participants' change in their attitudes either positively and negatively. As it is noted by Erkan and Şaban (2010:165) "writing is one of the most difficult language skills to master" and their past experiences may also have an effect on their attitudes towards writing. Thus, students' past experiences can be studied in order to see how L1 writing experiences influence their writing attitudes in L2.

In our study, the questionnaire used assessed the students' attitudes only and there was no other dimension which assessed the effect of the scale used, materials used, and the procedure used in the writing course. A study can also be made to investigate the role teacher feedback, writing exams, materials and even curriculum on the students writing attitudes. The institution may revise the writing content and materials which may help to develop more positive attitudes and perceptions towards the writing course.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1
WRITING SYLLABUS

BOOK-1 UNIT	CONTENTS	OBJECTIVES	WEEK
UNIT-1	INTRODUCTION TO PROCESS WRITING	In this unit students will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - discuss why they write - learn the importance of purposes and audience in writing, - learn about process writing. 	1 WEEK 22-26 NOV
UNIT-2	GETTING READY TO WRITE	In this unit students will learn the pre-writing techniques.	1 WEEK 29 NOV-3 DEC
UNIT-3	PARAGRAPH STRUCTURE	In this unit, students will learn, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the definition of a paragraph. - the parts of a paragraph. - how to make an outline of our paragraphs. 	2 WEEKS 6-17 DEC
UNIT-4	UNITY- COHERENCE	In this unit, students will learn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to analyze a paragraph for unity. - to recognize unity in supporting sentences. - the ways to achieve coherence and cohesion in a paragraph 	1 WEEK 20-24 DEC
UNIT-5	PROCESS PARAGRAPH	In this unit, students will learn about process paragraphs and reasons for learning them.	1 WEEK 27-31 DEC
UNIT-6	OPINION PARAGRAPH	In this unit, students will <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - identify facts and opinions - use reasons to support an opinion - organize the opinion paragraph - use transition signals and sentence structures expressing opinions. - outline and write paragraphs expressing opinion 2.DÖNEM	2 WEEKS 3-14 JAN
UNIT-7	DESCRIPTIVE PARAGRAPH	In this unit, students will learn about ... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - descriptive paragraphs and reasons for writing them, - organizing and writing descriptive paragraphs 	2 WEEKS 7-18 FEB

		- using adjectives and prepositions.	
UNIT-8	CAUSE & EFFECT PARAGRAPH	In this unit, students will learn: - the relationship between cause and effect, - cause/effect conjunctions, - how to write a cause/effect paragraph	2 WEEKS 21 FEB-4 MARCH
UNIT-9	COMPARISON & CONTRAST PARAGRAPH	In this unit, students will learn: - how to write comparison-contrast paragraph - connecting words used for comparison and contrasting topics.	2 WEEKS 7-18 MARCH

BOOK-2

UNIT	CONTENTS	OBJECTIVES	WEEK
UNIT-1	FROM PARAGRAPH TO ESSAY	Students will learn the structure of an essay the definition of the essay how to format an essay	1 WEEK 21-25 MARCH
UNIT 2	CLASSIFICATION ESSAY	Students will learn - how to organize classification essay - to write about classification essay - transitions about the order of importance, degree and size	2 WEEKS 28 MARCH-8 APRIL
UNIT-3	CAUSE & EFFECT ESSAY	Students will learn -how to organize cause and effect essay - to write about cause and effect relationship essay	2 WEEKS 11-22 APRIL
UNIT-4	COMPARISON & CONTRAST ESSAY	Students will learn - how to organize comparison & contrast essay - write comparison & contrast essay	2 WEEKS 25 APRIL -6 MAY
UNIT-5	PROBLEM SOLUTION ESSAY	Students will learn - to write about problems and solutions	2 WEEKS (NOT INCLUDED)
UNIT-6	ARGUMENTATIVE ESSAY	Students will learn to write about argumentative essay,	3 WEEKS 9-27 MAY

APPENDIX II
Questionnaire

Sayın Öğrenci,
“Pamukkale Üniversitesi Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu Hazırlık Sınıfı Yazma Dersine Karşı Algı ve Tutumlarının Ölçülmesi” konusunda Yüksek Lisans Tez çalışması için hazırlanan bu anket formunu cevaplamada göstereceğiniz hassasiyet ve katkılarınızdan dolayı teşekkür ederiz.

Yrd. Doç. Dr Turan PAKER
Pamukkale Üniversitesi

Ali ERARSLAN
Pamukkale

Üniversitesi

Eğitim Fakültesi

Yabancı Diller

Yüksekokulu

İngiliz Dili Eğitimi ABD.

Öğrenci Kod: (Dersin Öğretmeni Tarafından)

Cinsiyet : Bayan () Bay ()

Yaş : 17 () 18 () 19 () 20 () 21 () 22 () Diğer:
(Belirtiniz)

Bölüm : İktisat () İşletme () Kamu Yön () Tıp () FTR ()
Biyoloji ()
Çevre Müh. () İnşaat Müh. () Turizm Otelcilik ()
Diğer (Belirtiniz).....

Öğrenim Türü : N.Ö () İ.Ö ()

Öğrenim Dönemi: Güz () Bahar ()

Hazırlık Sınıfı: Zorunlu () Seçmeli ()

İngilizce Seviyeniz: Pre Int() Int () Upper Int Intermediate ()

		Kesinlikle Katılmıyorum	Katılmıyorum	Kararsızım	Katılıyorum	Kesinlikle Katılıyorum
1	İngilizce’de yazma becerimi mümkün olduğunca geliştirmek isterim.					

2	İngilizce yazma dersi, önem verilmesi gereken dil becerilerinden biridir.					
3	İngilizce yazma dersinde kendimi tedirgin ve mutsuz hissedirim.					
4	İngilizce’de yazma becerimi geliştirmek ilgimi çekmez.					
5	İngilizce yazmayı öğrenmek bana çok eğlenceli gelir.					
6	İngilizce yazma becerileri haftalık ders saatinin azaltılmasını isterim.					
7	Zamanımı İngilizce’de yazma becerilerini öğrenmeye çalışarak harcamaktansa, başka şeylerle ilgilenmeyi tercih ederim.					
8	İngilizce yazma dersinde, farklı dil ve kültürleri tanımak ilgimi çeker.					
9	İngilizce öğrenmenin hayat boyu bana yararlı olacağını düşünürüm.					
10	İngilizce yazma becerileri dersini iple çekerim.					
11	İngilizce yazma dersinde öğrendiğim kelimeleri veya cümle kalıplarını unuttuğumda ders çalışma isteğim azalır.					
12	Bir konu hakkında İngilizce yazı yazmak zorunda olduğumda kendimi çok sıkıntılı hissedirim.					
13	İngilizcede yazılı olarak iletişim kurmanın anlamsız olduğunu düşünürüm.					
14	İngilizce yazmayı öğrenmek insanın bakış açısını genişletir.					
15	İngilizce mektuplaşabileceğim bir arkadaşım olsun isterim.					
16	İleride İngilizce yazılı iletişim kullanmamı gerektirecek bir meslek seçmeyi düşünmem.					
17	İngilizce yazma dersiyle ilgili bir problemim olduğunda çalışma hevesimi kaybederim.					
18	İngilizce yazma derslerinde zamanın nasıl geçtiğini anlamam.					
19	İngilizce yazma derslerinde ileride bana gerekli olan becerileri kazandığımı hissedirim.					
20	İngilizce yazma dersi zorunlu olmasa, İngilizce öğrenmek için hiç çaba harcamam.					
21	İngilizce yazma becerilerini öğrenmenin günlük hayatta bir yararı olmayacağını düşünürüm.					
22	İngilizce yazma dersi, gereksiz bir derstir.					
23	İngilizce yazma dersinde yeni şeyler öğrenmek hoşuma gider.					
24	İngilizce yazma becerileri dersi sevdiğim dersler arasındadır.					
25	İngilizce yazmayı öğrenmek zorunda olmayı istemezdim.					

26	İngilizcemi ve yazma becerilerini geliřtirmek için daha fazla ders almak isterim.					
27	İngilizce yazma derslerinden nefret ederim.					
28	Boř zamanlarımı İngilizce yazma üzerinde çalışarak geçirmekten zevk alırım.					

CURRICULUM VITAE

Name & Surname : Ali ERARSLAN
Place of Birth : Gölhisar -BURDUR
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English Language Teaching Department
Date of Graduation : 2007
Work Experience : English Language Instructor at Pamukkale University
(September, 2007 –)