

Keywords

Personal Goal Setting, Action Plan, Goal Achievement, EFL Writing, EFL Writing Attitude

Anahtar Sözcükler

Bireysel Hedef Belirleme, Eylem Planı, Hedefe Ulaşma, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizcede Yazma, Yabancı Dil Olarak İngilizcede Yazmaya Yönelik Tutum

PERSONAL GOAL-SETTING IN AN EFL WRITING CLASS

YABANCI DİL OLARAK İNGİLİZCE ÖĞRENEREN ÖĞRENCİLERİN YAZMA DERSİNDE BİREYSEL HEDEF BELİRLEME

• Özlem Öztürk

Dr. Öğr. Gör., Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulu, ozturk.ozlem@deu.edu.tr

Abstract

This study examined the types of goals and action plans set by Turkish EFL learners before they start writing an academic essay. The perceptions related to their goal achievement and the effects of personal goal-setting on attitudes of Turkish EFL learners' towards writing in English were also investigated. Non-probability convenience sampling was used to choose the sample of the study. In the one-group pretest-posttest quasi-experimental design, 25 participants set their goals and action plans on a goal form before they wrote their essays. Then they were asked to reflect on their goal achievements on the same forms after receiving teacher feedback. A possible change in their attitudes towards writing in English was also sought using Attitudes towards Writing in English Questionnaire which was developed by the researcher. The goal and action plans of the participants were analyzed using a taxonomy of goals and taxonomy of actions. It was found that the participants of the study tended to have language goals mostly. In terms of actions taken to achieve their goals, self-regulation or heuristic actions were chosen. There was no statistically significant change in the attitudes of the participants. However, a positive significant change was seen in the sub-scale "Intrinsic motivation for EFL writing". The study showed that personal goal setting can be useful to assist learners in EFL writing contexts when they are given guidance about setting goals, taking actions to achieve their goals and reflecting on their goal achievements.

Öz

Bu çalışma İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen Türk öğrencilerin akademik bir yazı yazmadan önce belirledikleri hedefleri ve eylem planlarını saptamayı amaçlamıştır. Hedefe ulaşma başarısı ve bireysel hedef belirlemenin İngilizce yazmaya yönelik tutum üzerindeki etkisi de çalışmanın kapsamı içindedir. Örneklem seçkisiz olmayan uygun örnekleme yöntemi ile seçilmiştir. Tek gruplu öntest-sontest yarı deneysel desende, çalışmanın 25 katılımcısı akademik yazılarını yazmadan önce hedeflerini ve hedeflerini gerçekleştirmeye yönelik eylem planlarını yazılı formda belirtmişlerdir. Öğretmen tarafından yazılarına verilen dönüt sonrası hedeflerine ne derece ulaştıkları konusunda yazılı yorum yapmışlardır. Araştırmada ayrıca katılımcıların İngilizce yazmaya yönelik tutumlarında olası bir değişikliği saptamak için araştırmacı tarafından geliştirilen İngilizce Yazmaya Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Katılımcıların hedefleri ve eylem planları bu amaç için hazırlanan hedef ve eylem planları sınıflandırmasına göre çözümlenmiştir. Katılımcıların yazma öncesi kendilerine daha çok dil hedefleri koydukları saptanmıştır. Eylem planı sınıflandırmasında ise öz-düzenleme veya deneysel eylemlere yöneldikleri görülmüştür. Katılımcıların tutumlarında anlamlı bir değişiklik bulunmamıştır. Ancak "İngilizce yazma için içsel güdü" alt ölçeğinde olumluya dönük anlamlı bir değişiklik görülmüştür. Çalışma bireysel hedef belirlemenin İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğrenen öğrencilere yazma bağlamında hedef belirleme, eylem planı hazırlama ve başarı değerlendirme bakımından yardımcı olabileceğini göstermektedir.

Introduction

Writing is a productive activity in any language. Writing in a foreign language is seen as a more difficult practice compared to writing in one's native language due to language proficiency, having little practice of writing in L1 (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996) and lack of confidence (Harmer, 2007). Foreign language teachers often have difficulty to engage their students in writing experience (Barkaoui, 2007). Assisting students to set their own goals for writing in a foreign language may help both teachers and students to share a fruitful experience. Identifying their writing needs, students may overcome their language and psychological barriers and become better writers in English. When teachers realize the positive effects of personal goal-setting on writing, they may help more to their students and feel satisfied in their jobs.

There are numerous definitions for 'goal'. Before addressing its facilitative functions, it would be reasonable to remind the meaning of it. "Goals concern the reasons one has for engaging in a particular activity" (Stipek, 2002, p. 161). Locke and Latham (2013) defined the term 'goal' as "the object or aim of an action" (p. 4). Research on goal theory has categorized goals in two different types. These are mastery (also known as learning goals or task involvement goals) and performance goals (also known as ego-involvement goals). Mastery goals are mostly related to learning and improving competence and skills whereas performance goals focus on performing better than others (Ames, 1992; Brophy, 1998; Pintrich, Conley & Kempler 2003; Stipek, 2002).

In learning a foreign or second language, mastery goal types may be divided in two sub-categories. Rubin (2015) suggested two different goals, namely, a language goal and a learning goal. A language goal is related to elements of a target language such as grammar, vocabulary or spelling that a learner wants to improve. A learning goal is related to the learning process and how it can be improved by the learner. Applying appropriate strategies for a particular task such as seeking assistance while learning or controlling feelings while learning are among the learning goals.

Both language and learning goals can be set by the teacher or the curriculum. Whether the goals or objectives of the lesson are achieved or not can be evaluated using achievement tests. The results are used to detect problematic aspects of the curriculum or teaching and this feedback enables teachers to focus on problematic topics. However, goals may be self-set rather than assigned. As learners have different learning backgrounds, styles, beliefs and paces, each learner's goal may be different from the teacher's, the curriculum's and the other learners' goals in the classroom. To exemplify, Zhou, Busch and Cumming (2014) tried to answer whether students' and teachers' goals correspond in English as a second language writing classes. The findings of their study indicated that most of the students' goals were related with accurate

usage of grammar in writing. The teachers, on the other hand, reported their unwillingness to teach grammar in writing classes. Their goals focused more on writing style or appropriate register rather than basic grammar features.

Self-set goals help students to notice their own strengths and weaknesses (Bloom, 2013). Indeed, these goals influence the performance of learners. Dörnyei (2001) explained how goals affect performance in four different mechanisms. First of all, goals lead learners to focus on goal-relevant activities. Secondly, learners adjust their effort level according to task difficulty when they have goals. Thirdly, learners become more persistent to achieve the tasks thanks to goals. Last but not least, learners pursue appropriate strategies to achieve their goals. Bandura (1991) made a comparison about learners who set goals and who do not. Accordingly, achievement level of learners without self-set goals does not change whereas learners with self-set goals outperform their previous success. For example, Moeller, Theiler, & Wu (2012) conducted a longitudinal study which lasted 5 years in 23 high schools. The results of the study indicated that there was a significant relationship between goal setting and language achievement of learners. It was also stated that when students practiced the goal setting process more, they became more successful. In other words, when students improved more in goal setting, action plans and reflection process, they had higher proficiency test results.

The role of setting personal goals is crucial in self-regulated learning, too. When students set goals, they organize their learning and assess their own performance. They even make necessary adjustments when needed. Seeing their goals are achieved, their self-efficacy level rises and thus they set more challenging goals and their motivation increases (Schunk, 1990). The findings of a recent quasi-experimental study revealed that reading strategy instruction with personal goal setting increased the self-efficacy and motivation level of EFL learners as well as their reading proficiency (Shih & Reynolds, 2017). In another study, Hematia, Rezaei & Mohammadyfar (2017) worked with secondary school students who were trained about SMART model for setting goals. It was proven that teaching goal setting is effective especially with students who lack self-directed learning and achievement motivation.

Another possible advantage of setting personal goals is that it may offer positive changes in terms of writing attitudes of learners. Topuz (2004) investigated possible changes in attitudes of students towards writing in English after application of two different goal setting procedures. The study found that students from self-set goal setting group revealed more positive changes compared to the students from assigned goals setting group.

In language classrooms, setting personal goals offers many advantages to overcome some negative affective variables which may influence learner's self-efficacy, motivation and performance levels. To give a clear example, anxiety in an EFL classroom has a significant

correlation with student performance in English (Liu & Huang, 2011; Negari & Rezaabadi, 2012). Reducing anxiety boosts self-efficacy and strategy use of learners which results in better writing outcomes in EFL classes. Therefore, teachers should find ways of lowering anxiety. Creating student-centered classrooms may help learners to overcome their anxiety and become more motivated (Blasco, 2016). Goal setting procedure may help teachers to create student-centered classrooms as it provides learners to have a word in their own learning processes.

The significance of goal setting in motivation, which is another significant affective variable, is obvious. Motivated behavioral process begins when the learner sets a goal. However, as Dörnyei (2001) underlined, without an action plan to achieve the goal, the learner does not initiate any actions. An action schemata and a time frame are needed for goal achievement. In other words, the learner should follow some steps, strategies and deadlines for actions.

Locke (1996), who summarized all goal setting theories under 14 categories of findings within the relevant literature, stated that feedback showing progress in relation to the goal enhanced the effectiveness of goal setting. For learners to persist in their goals or to challenge themselves for harder goals, a kind of assessment, comment or criticism is needed. In a learning environment, teacher feedback can help learners to pursue their self-set goals. Self-assessment can be another way of assessing the attainability of goals. Teacher guidance may be needed, though. In her study, for instance, Çapar (2014) tried to find out to what extent EFL learners could reflect on their writings. The study revealed that learners performed better to reflect on both their essays and their learning processes when they were guided by the teacher.

When students are guided by their teachers, they seem to perform better in learning. The effects of goal setting for revision in an EFL writing classroom were explored by Huang (2015). In this quasi- experimental study, there were three groups. The control group students were not asked to do anything before they wrote their revisions. Those in the goal and goal + group were asked to write their goals before their revisions and the goal + group was given a strategy list before they set their goals. The results indicated that students who received revision strategy list performed better than the other two groups. More importantly, it was reminded in the study that assessment should not be only the teacher's responsibility but also the learners' as well. The study showed that students who set their goals were more aware of the assessment process of their own learning.

In writing classes in L2 context, teachers should guide learners about setting their goals, managing their learning process and reflect on their performance for effective learning. Giving summative feedback on student essays affect students' learning negatively. It also increases the work load of teachers. When students set their own goals and check their own progress, this allows teachers to give formative feedback on student essays. Therefore, both learners and teachers can benefit from the personal goal setting process (Lee, 2017).

The reasons of why learners need to take part in setting their own goals have been discussed so far. Another topic to be discussed is how teachers can lead their students to write their personal goals. Teaching SMART goals can help learners to set their goals appropriately and enhance the outcomes of learning (Lawlor & Hornyak, 2012). SMART is the acronym for goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based (Rubin, 2015). The letters in SMART model of goals represents the characteristics of efficient goals. Rubin (2015) created a kind of rubric to evaluate the effectiveness of self-set goals compiling the work of Castrillón et al. (2013, as cited in Rubin, 2015). Figure 1 shows the criteria compiled in his work.

The concept of SMART goals can be utilized to teach learners how to write effective goals. To make them more effective, the goals written by the students and the action plans can be evaluated and the findings can be used for further instruction. In terms of teaching EFL writing, Zhou et al. (2006) suggested a framework to understand the goals which they believed would help improving EFL writing practices of learners. In their taxonomy, the objects of goals were (a) language, (b) rhetoric or genres, (c) composing processes, (d) ideas and knowledge, (e) affective states, (f) learning and transfer, and (g) identity and self-awareness. The actions taken to achieve the goals were (a) seeking assistance from instructor, (b) seeking assistance from others, (c) self-regulation or use of heuristics, (d) using tools or resources, (e) studying, (f) altering conditions for writing or stimulation, and (g) reading.

Self-set goals can be utilized in all skills of language. Nevertheless, as Grabe (2006) stated “writing is a strongly goal-directed activity” (p. xi). Especially in process writing, the activity starts with setting goals which is followed by generating ideas, organizing information, choosing the genre, drafting, reviewing, revising and editing (Hedge, 2000). Nunan (1998) urged EFL teachers to allow learners to set their own goals so that they could contribute to their own learning process. When learners set their personal goals in writing classes, this may assist them in “building the writing habit” (Harmer, 2007, p. 113). As good writers have their own goals, detailed plans and strategies (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996), teaching how to set personal goals is an important part of writing instruction in EFL classes.

Criteria	Best (4)	3	2	Poor (1)
Specific	The goal is very specific.	The goal is not very specific or there are several goals.	The goal is vague or not clear.	The goal is not a goal or no goal is given.
Measurable	Clear and explicit criteria for measurement are stated.	Criteria are not very clear or very explicit.	Criteria given are hard to apply.	No measure of stated goal is given.

Achievable	The learner provides specific evidence why the goal is achievable citing their own knowledge and time constraints.	The learner identifies steps to reach goal but only mentions time or knowledge why it is achievable.	The learner identifies steps to reach goal but does not mention their own knowledge or time constraints.	No answer is given.
Relevant	The learner provides detailed reasons why the goal is relevant to his/ her interests.	The learner provides sparse evidence why the goal is relevant and personal.	The learner says the goal is relevant but provides no evidence that the goal is relevant.	There is no indication. No answer is given.
Time-based	The learner states a clear and realistic time for accomplishing the goal. It is realistic given the knowledge a learner has.	The learner gives a specific time for accomplishing the goal but it doesn't seem realistic.	The stated time is vague or unrealistic given the stated goal.	No time for accomplishing the goal is stated.

Figure 1: SMART goal rubric by Rubin (2015, p. 73-74)

As goals are associated with self-regulated learning, motivation, actions taken and persistence, it is a complex term (Grabe, 2006). Thus, studying on goal setting in EFL writing may help people in the field to understand the complexity of the term and provide improvement in EFL writing instruction. In this regard, the study sought answers for the following questions:

- 1) What goals do Turkish EFL learners set before they start writing an academic essay?
- 2) What actions do Turkish EFL learners plan to take to achieve their writing goals?
- 3) What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL learners related to their goal achievement?
- 4) What are the effects of personal goal-setting on attitudes of Turkish EFL learners' towards writing in English?

2. Method

Non-probability convenience sampling was used to choose the participants of this quasi-experimental study. Non-probability convenience sampling is generally used because of its advantages in terms of time, convenience and accessibility for the researcher (Bornstein, Jager & Putnick, 2013; Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim 2015; Kothari, 2004). A more important reason for this type of sampling was that the aim of the study was not to generalize the results of the study but to have a deeper understanding of how learners dealt with the goal setting process in a particular setting.

The sample was chosen among the classes that the researcher taught because of its convenience and accessibility. A control group was not included in the study as the researcher had only one writing class. Assigning another class as a control group was avoided as a different teacher which means another independent variable could have affected the results adversely. The researcher wanted to ensure that the only independent variable was the treatment. After the sample was chosen, the steps for one-group pretest-posttest design were followed. The one-group pre-test-posttest design can be diagrammed as follows:

O1	X	O2
Pre-test (Attitudes towards Writing in English Questionnaire)	Treatment (Goal-setting training, setting goals, reflecting on goals)	Post-test (Attitudes towards Writing in English Questionnaire)

Figure 2: One-group pre-test-post-test design

O₁ represents the pretest, X represents the treatment, and O₂ represents the posttest. In this study, Attitudes towards Writing in English Questionnaire was given as pre- and post-test. Before the treatment, the pre-questionnaire was given in one session. The treatment lasted for 10 weeks. In the eleventh week, the post-questionnaire was given.

2.1. Participants

The participants of this study were studying English as preparatory students of School of Foreign Languages, at Dokuz Eylul University, Izmir, Turkey. There were 13 female and 12 male students in the experimental group. These 25 students started their education in an intermediate English level class. The study, however, started in the second term of the school which means that the participants had completed a four-month course and were continuing their education in upper-intermediate level.

The researcher was the instructor who implemented goal-setting in her lectures. She had 17 years' experience in her job. She was teaching Integrated Reading Writing lesson in the experimental group 5 hours a week.

2.2. Instruments

2.2.1. Goal-setting form

The goal setting form was prepared by the researcher (See Appendix A). Stimulated recall protocols (Zhou et al. 2006) and interview questions (Busch, 2006; Yang, 2006) prepared for several goal setting studies were examined and then the form was written. There were two parts in the form. The first part was for the main goals and actions that would be taken to achieve them before writing an essay and the second part was related to how much the students thought they achieved their goals after they got feedback from the teacher. The form was in Turkish. Name and surname of the student and the date were also included.

2.2.2. Attitudes towards Writing in English Questionnaire

Questionnaires are used to describe abilities, performances or characteristics of learners in a learning context. Likert Scales are especially beneficial to gather data about respondents' beliefs, attitudes, or opinions about several aspects of language learning (Brown & Rodgers, 2002). In this study, a possible change in writing attitudes of the participants was sought. Therefore, a questionnaire was developed by the researcher. A five-point Likert Scale was used in the questionnaire. After reading the relevant literature about writing in English, 35 items for the questionnaire were written in Turkish. Three experts were consulted for internal validity. The pilot study was conducted at Dokuz Eylül University Preparatory School with 250 preparatory class students studying English. The experimental group was not included in the pilot study. After the pilot study, Factor Analysis and Cronbach's Alpha Test were run to establish the reliability of the questionnaire. After the statistical analysis, 11 items were excluded since they did not fit in any dimensions and their item test correlations were not appropriate for the questionnaire. As a result, the questionnaire had 24 items with four dimensions and the total reliability of the questionnaire was calculated as 0.90. Intrinsic motivation for EFL writing, the contribution of writing in EFL learning, self-efficacy in EFL writing, and anxiety related to organizing an essay in EFL context were the dimensions of the questionnaire. The final version of the questionnaire explained %55.865 of the total variance in the dependent variable.

2.3. Procedure

Integrated Reading & Writing Course was planned as 5 hours a week by the School of Foreign Languages, Curriculum and Development Unit. The course book material was also prepared by this unit. The theme and the style of reading texts were matched with the essay types that the students were expected to write. The implementation for goal-setting was planned on the condition that the students were able to follow the requirements of the schedule.

Before the implementation of goal-setting, students were given a 45-minute lecture about how to write SMART goals. The students were given the statement "I will improve my English

vocabulary”. Then this goal was rewritten according to the SMART goals rubric. Students were taught how to set specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-based goals with other examples. They were also given time to set a goal about their life and a classroom discussion was held to reflect on their self-set goals. Subsequently, students were given goal-setting form copies and the implementation started.

The students wrote 5 essays during the experimental process which lasted 10 weeks. All the essays were written in the class hour. As is seen in Figure 3, the students wrote two drafts for each type of essay. After the first draft, the teacher gave students written feedback. The following week, the students received their first drafts with feedback and they reflected on how much they thought they achieved their goals. Then, they wrote their second drafts as the final version of their essays. Figure 3 represents the process followed for essay writing:

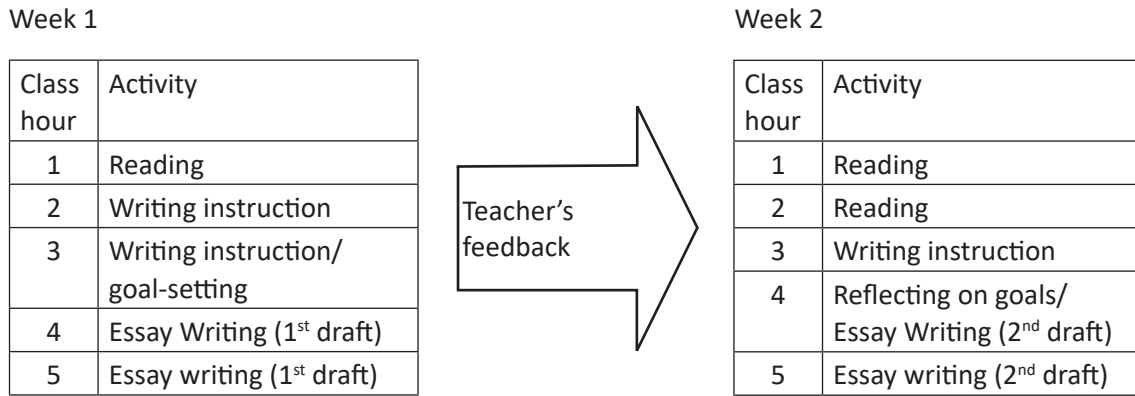


Figure 3: Procedure for each type of essay

Following the procedure explained in Figure 3, the students wrote five types of essays in ten weeks. These were: (1) cause and effect essay, (2) problem and solution essay, (3) persuasive essay, (4) describing a chart, (5) a book review for the book “Nelson’s Dream” written by Julia Newsome.

3. Data Analysis

3.1. Findings related to objects of goals, actions taken and perceptions about goal-achievement

In order to answer what goals Turkish EFL learners set before they start writing an academic essay, the goal forms were analyzed and the written goals were categorized according to the taxonomy of goals determined by Zhou et al. (2006). Examples from goal setting forms are given in Appendix B and Appendix C. There were totally 220 goals and actions counted.

The objects of goals, frequencies for the goals and their percentages are given in Table 1.

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage of Objects of Goals According to the Goal Taxonomy

Objects of Goals	<i>f</i>	%
Language	140	64
Rhetoric	36	16.3
Composing Process	30	14
Ideas & Knowledge	0	0
Learning & Transfer	7	0.32
Identity & Self-Awareness	7	0.32

As seen in Table 1, the goal objects written by the students were in language category, followed by rhetoric and composing process (64%, 16.3% and 14%, respectively). The students did not write any goals under the category of ideas and knowledge.

In order to answer what actions Turkish EFL learners plan to achieve their goals before they start writing an academic essay, the goal forms were analyzed and the actions were categorized according to the taxonomy of actions determined by Zhou et al. (2006).

Table 2: Frequency and Percentage of Actions Planned to Take to Achieve Goals According to Actions Taxonomy

Actions Taken	<i>f</i>	%
Seeking Assistance from Instructors	5	.23
Seeking Assistance from Others	7	0.32
Self-regulation or Heuristic	100	45.5
Studying	15	0.70
Altering Conditions or Stimulation	3	0.13
Reading	5	0.23
Using Tools/Resources	80	36.4
No Action	5	0.23

As seen in Table 2, the participants' actions taken to achieve their goals were mostly in self-regulation or heuristic category (45%) which was followed by using tools or resources (36.4%). Altering conditions for writing or stimulation type of actions were among the least preferred actions (0.13%).

"What are the perceptions of Turkish EFL learners related to their goal achievement?" was another question to be answered in this study. The goal forms were analyzed and the answers of the students were counted.

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of Perception Level for Goal Achievement

Perception level for goal achievement	<i>f</i>	%
Achieved	92	42
Partly Achieved	72	33
Not Achieved	24	11
No Comment	32	14

As seen in Table 3, the participants reported that they achieved 42% of their self-set goals while 33% of these goals were partly achieved. There was no comment for 14% of the stated goals.

3.2. Findings related to effects of goal setting on attitudes of Turkish EFL learners towards writing in English

To answer the question related to the effects of personal goal-setting on attitudes of Turkish EFL learners towards writing in English, a statistical package program was benefited from in obtaining the research results. The data obtained from the statistical tests were analyzed running an independent *t*-test. First, an independent *t*-test was conducted on all items in Attitudes towards Writing in English Questionnaire to determine the difference before and after the implementation of goal-setting.

Table 4: Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Pre-questionnaire and Post-questionnaire

Questionnaire	N	M	Sd	<i>t</i>
Pre-questionnaire	25	3.27	.53	-1.980
Post-questionnaire	25	3.60	.63	

Table 4 indicates the results of the independent *t*-test which was run for all items of the questionnaire. The result of the *t*-test shows that there was no statistically significant difference between the test averages of the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire ($p < .05$). However, the difference in attitudes towards writing in English was notable as significance degree was very close to significance level ($p = 0.53$, $p < .05$). In addition, the mean score of the pre-questionnaire was 3.27 which means that the participants had already had close to positive attitude towards writing in English. Thus, the participants might not have developed a marginal change in their attitudes.

After analyzing the total mean scores of the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire, independent *t*-test was run for dimensions of the questionnaire and the results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5: Significance of Difference between the Mean Scores of Dimensions of Pre-questionnaire and Post-questionnaire

Dimension	Questionnaire	N	M	Sd	t
Intrinsic Motivation for EFL writing	Pre-questionnaire	25	2.63	0.80	-2.29*
	Post-questionnaire	25	3.18	0.88	
The Contribution of Writing in EFL Learning	Pre-questionnaire	25	4.14	.74	-.806
	Post-questionnaire	25	4.30	.66	
Self-efficacy in EFL Writing	Pre-questionnaire	25	3.33	.66	-1.403
	Post-questionnaire	25	3.57	.54	
Anxiety Related to Organizing an Essay in EFL context	Pre-questionnaire	25	2.93	.77	-1.663
	Post-questionnaire	25	3.32	.86	

* $p < .05$

Table 5 indicates the results of the independent t-test which was run for the items of the four dimensions in the questionnaires. The result of the t-test shows that there was a statistically significant difference between the test averages of the pre-questionnaire and the post-questionnaire in terms of the dimension called as “Intrinsic motivation for EFL writing” ($p < .05$). No statistical difference was found in “The contribution of writing in EFL learning”, “self-efficacy in EFL writing”, and “anxiety related to organizing an essay in EFL context” dimensions.

As Table 5 presents, the mean score of pre-questionnaire for “The contribution of writing in EFL learning” dimension was 4.14 showing that the participants had already thought writing contributed EFL learning before the implementation. The mean score of post-questionnaire for the same dimension was 4.30 which was high in a five-point Likert scale. The data suggests that there was a slight positive change between mean scores for the “self-efficacy in EFL writing” dimension. Finally, for the “anxiety related to organizing an essay in EFL context” dimension, there was a slight positive change meaning that the participants became less anxious in organizing an essay in EFL context.

4. Discussion

Analysis of the data reveals that learners in the EFL writing class mostly tended to set language goals. These are goals related with the grammar and vocabulary usage in the target language. These findings were similar with the results of the study conducted by Zhou, Busch and Cumming (2014). In their study, the learners wanted to improve their grammar, particularly verb tenses and clause structure. In the present study, the language goals were followed by rhetoric and composing process. In their study Zhou et al. (2006) found that the objects of goals students set were language, rhetoric and ideas and knowledge. Turkish EFL writing class students did not set any goals about ideas and knowledge category which is mainly about goals related

with concepts and information in the essays. In their study Zhou et al. (2006) worked with 15 students from a university. They were from different nationalities (mostly Chinese). Some of them were in master's program and their average score on the institutional version of the TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) was 550 which may mean that those students were more familiar with composing process of writing because of their programs and TOEFL scores they got. This might be the reason why they needed to focus on the content of their essays instead of language goals. In this study, however, the participants were in the preparatory class and had not studied academic writing before. Length of being exposed to academic writing instruction in the target language may affect the objects of personal goals. Another reason for this difference may be the different cultures. As Grabe and Kaplan (1996) highlighted, country of origin, cultural expectations for learning, length of prior English study and social and political attitudes towards English may influence writing in English.

As Dörnyei (2001) stated, learners practice some strategies or actions to achieve their goals. Almost half of the all written actions in this study were in self-regulation or heuristic category. These actions mostly focus on planning, monitoring, reflecting, translating or mind-mapping. Almost one third of goals focused on using tools and resources such as dictionaries, the Internet, course book, and the grammar book. Zhou et al. (2006) reported that studying was the action which was mostly preferred by the participants followed by seeking assistance from instructors. In both studies, the participants first tried taking personal actions. In the Turkish context, however, the learners' second preference was using tools and resources which was also a personal action. Cumming (2006) stated that goals and actions taken to achieve them can be different because of different cultural, identity, linguistic, social, educational backgrounds. Briefly, it does not sound surprising that the participants from different countries set different goals and actions.

Among 220 goals set by the students, 92 of them were reflected as achieved and 72 of them were reflected as partly achieved. 24 of the goals were not achieved. 32 of them were not evaluated which may mean that students need further guidance about reflecting on their work. Asking for their perception about the goals was a part of the goal setting treatment as it helped students for goal-orientation. The high number of achieved goals is not important for the study. The point that matters is helping students to reflect on their personally set goals. This was provided by the feedback given by the teacher. Feedback and teacher guidance boost effectiveness of personal goal setting in EFL classes (Çapar, 2014; Huang, 2015). It was observed in this study that regular feedback and scaffolding provided by the instructor enabled the participants to feel more confident while writing their goals and action plans.

According to the quantitative findings of this study, there was no significant change in attitudes towards writing in English after the implementation of personal goal setting. Within

the analysis of dimensions in the Attitudes towards Writing in English Questionnaire, the results indicated that intrinsic motivation of students increased significantly after the implementation. This result is consistent with what the literature says about the relationship between motivation and goal setting. Personal goal setting increases motivation in language classrooms (Dörnyei, 2001; Schunk, 1990; Shih & Reynolds, 2017; Topuz, 2014).

A positive but non-significant effect was observed in all other dimensions of the Attitudes towards Writing in English Questionnaire. Students' self-efficacy levels increased while their anxiety levels decreased which is consistent with the study of Blasco (2016). The students thought that EFL writing contributed to their learning in the target language. It should be noted here that the mean score for this dimension in the pre-questionnaire had already been 4.14. Hence, the slight positive difference (4.30) may be considered as important. Working with less motivated students like Hematia, Rezaei & Mohammadyfar (2017) did, might have caused more significant results in favor of goal setting.

Implications, Limitations, and Future Studies

The analyses and the results of this study provide valuable information about the goal orientation process of Turkish EFL learners in writing. EFL writing teachers should instruct learners about personal goal setting and support them in their actions so that they can achieve their goals. Supporting learners and scaffolding them in goal setting process may result in positive attitude and higher intrinsic motivation for writing in the target language. Letting students set their personal goals is a way of creating more learner centered classes.

This study has several limitations. First, there was no control group in this experimental design so the effects of the treatment were observed only in the experimental group. An experimental design with a control group can provide more data about the impact of the treatment. Secondly, this study lasted for 10 weeks which may be relatively a short time to observe a change in the attitudes of the participants. A longitudinal study in the same context may be conducted. In addition, a possible improvement in some skills such as metacognitive skills might be sought. Finally, the students in the study had already had some positive attitude towards writing in the target language. Implementing the treatment with students having negative attitudes towards writing in the target language may give more statistically significant results.

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Appendix A

Öğrenci Adı & Soyadı: _____ Tarih: _____

Bu kompozisyonu yazarken üç temel hedefim var.

1. hedefim

.....

Bu hedefi gerçekleştirmek için yapacaklarım:

.....

2. hedefim

.....

Bu hedefi gerçekleştirmek için yapacaklarım:

.....

3. hedefim

.....

Bu hedefi gerçekleştirmek için yapacaklarım:

.....

Yukarda yazmış olduğum hedeflerden sonra öğretmen kompozisyonumu değerlendirdi.
Sonuç olarak:

Hedefler	Ulaştım	Kısmen ulaştım	Ulaşamadım	Açıklamalar
1				
2				
3				

Appendix B

Examples from goal setting forms (Objects of Goals)

1. Language

Ayşe: I will try to be careful about the use of prepositions “to” and “for”.

Ahmet: I will write at least one passive sentence.

Zeynep: I will reduce my spelling mistakes.

2. Rhetoric

Ayşe: I will try to persuade the readers to believe in my opinion.

Ahmet: I will not repeat myself in the paragraphs.

Zeynep: I will write more effective sentences.

3. Composing process

Ayşe: I will not forget to add a title.

Ahmet: I will write faster.

Zeynep: I will write at least 5 paragraphs.

4. Ideas and Knowledge

X

5. Learning and Transfer

Ayşe: I will use the new phrases that we learnt.

Ahmet: I will use three words that I newly learnt.

6. Identity and Self-awareness

Ayşe: I write negligently, I won't anymore.

Ahmet: I write consistently so I will keep writing that way.

Zeynep: I have difficulty to concentrate so I have to find a way to focus.

Appendix C

Examples from goal setting forms (Actions Taken)

1. Seeking assistance from instructors

Ayşe: I will ask my teacher.

2. Seeking assistance from others

Ayşe: I will ask for help from Ahmet.

Ahmet: I will ask one of my classmates to check my essay after I finish.

3. Self-regulation-heuristic

Ayşe: I will check my work until I am sure that it is without mistakes.

Ahmet: I will think about the details after I finish, not while writing.

Zeynep: I will finish each paragraph in 15 minutes and use time remaining to check my essay.

4. Studying

Ayşe: I will study some tenses again.

Ahmet: When I go home, I will revise what we study at school.

Zeynep: I will study on sample essays.

5. Altering conditions /stimulation

Ayşe: I will try not lose my concentration to finish my essay as I planned.

Ahmet: I will not chat with my classmates.

6. Reading

Ayşe: I will read about global warming, civil organizations and alternative energy sources.

Ahmet: I will read to find better examples.

7. Using tools/resources

Ayşe: I will not hesitate to use a dictionary.

Ahmet: I will use my Main Course book to check my sentences.

Zeynep: I will not use Google Translate, I will use my dictionary instead.