

# An Investigation of Turkish EFL Instructors' Beliefs about Writing in English<sup>1</sup>

İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil Olarak Öğreten Türk Öğretim Görevlilerinin İngilizce Yazmaya İliskin İnancları Üzerine Bir İnceleme

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#### Abstract

The study investigated instructors' beliefs about the nature of L2 writing, teaching L2 writing, and assessing L2 writing, using inventory and interview data from 106 instructors in the Turkish EFL context. The results showed that although the Turkish EFL instructors value the process-oriented and genre-oriented approaches to writing, they cannot disregard the product-oriented approach. It was also found that the instructors do not have sufficient knowledge about the writing assessment terminology and the digital tools that can be used to teach writing. Moreover, the instructors did not reveal strong beliefs regarding portfolio assessment, self-assessment, and peer feedback. Based on the findings, several implications were suggested for teacher trainers and policymakers in terms of designing pre-service teacher training and in-service teacher development programs.

Keywords: Teacher beliefs, Nature of L2 writing, Teaching L2 writing, Assessing L2 writing, Teacher training

#### Öz

Çalışma, Türkiye'deki üniversitelerde yabancı dil olarak İngilizce eğitimi veren 106 öğretim görevlisinden alınan envanter ve görüşme verilerini kullanarak, öğretmenlerin ikinci dilde yazmanın doğası, ikinci dilde yazma eğitimi ve ikinci dilde yazmayı değerlendirme konusundaki inançlarını araştırdı. Sonuçlar, Türk öğretim görevlilerinin yazmaya yönelik süreç odaklı ve tür odaklı yaklaşımlara değer vermelerine rağmen, ürün odaklı yaklaşımı göz ardı edemediklerini göstermiştir. Ayrıca öğretmenlerin yazma değerlendirme terminolojisi ve yazma öğretiminde kullanılabilecek dijital araçlar hakkında yeterli bilgiye sahip olmadığı tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca, öğretmenler portfolyo değerlendirmesi, öz değerlendirme ve akran geri bildirimi ile ilgili güçlü inançlar ortaya koymamışlardır. Çalışmanın bulgularına dayanarak hizmet öncesi öğretmen eğitimi ve hizmet içi öğretmen geliştirme programlarının tasarlanması açısından öğretmen yetiştiricileri ve karar vericiler için çeşitli önerilerde bulunulmuştur.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Öğretmen inançları, İkinci dilde yazmanın doğası, İkinci dilde yazma eğitimi, İkinci dilde yazmanın değerlendirilmesi, Öğretmen eğitimi

#### Introduction

In general terms, beliefs are defined as "psychologically held understandings, premises, or propositions about the world that are felt to be true" (Richardson, 1996, p.103). Borg (2003) considers teacher belief under the broader term of teacher cognition which he defines as teachers' "knowledge, theories, attitudes, images, assumptions, metaphors, conceptions, perspective about teaching, teachers, learning, students, subject matter, curricula, materials, instructional activities, and self" (p.81). Thus, these two terms are used interchangeably in the literature. Investigating teachers' beliefs about learning and teaching language is valuable because beliefs determine teachers' teaching behaviours, instructional decisions, classroom practices, and teaching methods (Pajares, 1992), which in turn impact the effectiveness of the teaching process and the development of learners' performance (Burns, 1992; Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001). Therefore, it is important to unpack teachers' beliefs in order to understand their educational practices and

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the rationale underlying them (Borg, 2009). The manifestation of teachers' beliefs is also crucial to determining teachers' training needs regarding effective teaching, which might guide teacher educators in designing teacher training programs for prospective teachers (Tseng, 2019; Zheng, 2015). Furthermore, teachers can adopt any educational reform or innovation on condition that it aligns with their current belief systems. In this sense, it is necessary to surface and modify teachers' beliefs before starting a teacher education reform (Karaca & Uysal, 2021).

For the aforementioned reasons, the study of teachers' beliefs has attracted the attention of researchers in the field of language teaching for over the last 30 years (Zheng, 2015). The studies have frequently focused on teachers' beliefs about teaching grammar; however, considerably less research has investigated teachers' beliefs about writing and writing instruction in ESL or EFL contexts (Borg, 2003; Yiğitoğlu & Belcher, 2014). Thus, Borg (2015) calls for more research on teachers' beliefs about ESL/EFL writing instruction. Moreover, as it was pointed out by Fang (1996), university-level teachers' beliefs about ESL/EFL writing instruction have been under-researched. Therefore, the current study centred on university-level teachers' EFL writing beliefs.

The studies investigating university-level ESL/EFL writing teacher cognition have viewed it through various perspectives. In her doctoral dissertation, Yiğitoğlu (2011) investigated to what extent ESL writing teachers' experiences in writing in their first or second languages influenced their beliefs and practices regarding ESL writing instruction. The findings showed that the teachers' learning experiences had a considerable impact on their cognition in terms of teaching ESL writing. Khanalizadeh and Allami (2012) found that Iranian EFL teachers mostly held form-based views towards learning and teaching writing. Similarly, in Eftehkar's (2014) study, the Bangladeshi EFL instructors prioritized developing students' basic writing skills (e.g., writing grammatically correct sentences) rather than developing their ability as writers to communicate and socialise with others in the authentic real-life world.

Several studies have investigated teachers' beliefs about writing instruction, their actual classroom practices, and the (in)consistencies between their self-reported beliefs and classroom practices. In this regard, in Melketo's (2012) study, the Ethiopian EFL teachers reported that their beliefs about academic writing and their classroom practices were consistent, but some inconsistencies were detected in their actual practices. Similarly, Yang and Gao (2013) examined four experienced Chinese EFL teachers' beliefs and practices regarding writing. All of the teachers reported that they integrated both product and process orientations in their writing instruction. Three of these teachers demonstrated consistent beliefs and practices but the remaining one teacher's beliefs and practices showed somewhat inconsistency. Furthermore, Kim (2015) found that Korean university EFL teachers favoured process-writing, employing planning strategies, direct English writing, collaboration with peers, and using various tasks to evaluate students' performance rather than product-oriented or grammar-based writing instruction. Their cognition was in line with their decision making and practices. More recently, Alzaainin (2019) reported that Palestinian EFL university teachers' cognition about teaching L2 writing, and their professional roles affected their pedagogical practices.

Some other studies have investigated teachers' beliefs about corrective feedback and their classroom practices. Zan and Yiğitoğlu (2018) found that at a university in Northern Cyprus, both the experienced and the novice teachers believed that feedback has a crucial role in improving students' writing skills by showing their strengths and weaknesses and building a bridge between the teacher and the student. The findings also revealed that the teachers' previous learning experiences and the policies administered in their institution influenced their beliefs and practices. In the same vein, Şakrak-Ekin and Balçıkanlı (2019) reported that majority of the Turkish EFL teachers believed in the power of written corrective feedback in terms of improving students' writing skills by preventing their possibility to repeat the same mistakes in their future writing tasks, but some mismatches were detected between their self-reported beliefs and classroom practices. They based these mismatches on time constraints, poor level of students, the lack of a fixed policy about error correction in their institutions, and motivational factors. Finally, Mao and Crostwaite (2019) found misalignment between the Chinese EFL teachers' beliefs and practices in a few areas, which stemmed from time constraints, teachers' workload, and students' attitudes towards corrective feedback.



Teachers' beliefs about assessing writing and their assessment practices have also been examined by several studies. In Crusan's (2016) study, majority of the instructors believed that assessment has an important role in writing instruction, it is useful to employ different writing tasks in assessing writing performance (e.g., out-of-class writing assignments, portfolio assessment, and timed in-class assignments), and portfolios are the most effective way of writing assessment followed by self-assessment. However, in Valizadeh's (2019) study, nearly half of the Turkish EFL teachers were not sure about the efficacy of portfolio assessment and self-assessment in writing instruction. In addition, the teachers reported that they needed training in terms of giving feedback on students' written products and using self-, peer-, and portfolio-assessment in writing instruction. Recently, Wang, Lee, and Park (2020) revealed that although the participating teachers believed that assessment for learning was more important than assessment of learning in order to improve students' English writing skills, their practices showed the reverse. It was concluded that insufficient writing assessment training, students' characteristic qualities, institutional constraints, and the emphasis on high-stakes tests were the factors behind these inconsistencies.

The results of the studies reviewed in this section revealed that teachers hold different beliefs about the nature of writing, teaching writing and assessing writing in different ESL/EFL contexts. In this sense, to the researchers' best knowledge, only two studies have examined teacher beliefs in the Turkish EFL context where teachers are not given a specific training on teaching and assessing writing throughout their undergraduate education (Karaca, 2018). One of them investigated beliefs and practices about written corrective feedback (Şakrak-Ekin and Balçıkanlı, 2019); the other investigated beliefs about assessing writing (Valizadeh, 2019). However, teacher beliefs about the nature of writing and teaching writing in the Turkish EFL context have not been explored yet. In an attempt to address these gaps in the literature, the current study investigated Turkish EFL instructors' beliefs about the nature of EFL writing, teaching EFL writing, and assessing EFL writing using a psychometrically reliable and valid data collection tool (Teachers' English Writing Beliefs Inventory (TEWBI)) which was very recently developed by Karaca and Uysal (2021). Using this sound inventory, the present study will substantially contribute to the literature by providing a comprehensive investigation of Turkish EFL instructors' writing beliefs including various dimensions of writing (e.g., the nature of writing, teaching writing, and assessing writing). Qualitative data was also collected through semi-structured interviews in order to triangulate the data obtained from the inventory and get a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. As a result, the following research questions were derived based on the subscales of TEWBI:

- 1. What are the Turkish EFL instructors' beliefs about the nature of EFL writing?
- 2. What are the Turkish EFL instructors' beliefs about teaching EFL writing?
- 3. What are the Turkish EFL instructors' beliefs about assessing EFL writing?

## Method

# Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods research design which combined both quantitative and qualitative data collection procedures since mixing both kinds of data "provides a better understanding of the research problem and question than either method by itself and neutralizes the disadvantages that emerge from applying a particular method" (Creswell, 2012, p. 535). Specifically, it used a sequential explanatory mixedmethod research design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). First, quantitative data were collected and analysed to grasp a general picture of the instructors' beliefs about writing in English. Then, qualitative data were collected and analysed to gather further information regarding the instructors' beliefs about writing and to triangulate it with the data obtained from the quantitative phase of the study. The data obtained from the quantitative and qualitative phases of the study were integrated in the discussion part.

### **Participants**

A total number of 106 Turkish EFL instructors completed the inventory. The instructors were selected through purposive sampling. They were all full time Turkish EFL instructors in the Schools of Foreign Languages and the Departments of English Language Teaching and English Language and Literature of various state universities in Turkey and had at least one semester of experience in teaching writing skills. Participation in this study was voluntary, thus the participants gave consent before they completed the inventory. Table 1 presents specific demographic information of the participants.



		f	%
Gender	Female	76	71.7
	Male	30	28.3
Age	21-29	6	5.7
	30-39	63	59.4
	40-49	29	27.4
	50 years and above	8	7.5
Educational Degree	B.A.	28	26.4
	M.A.	54	50.9
	Ph.D.	24	22.6
B.A. Major	English Language Teaching	49	46.2
	English Linguistics	4	3.8
	English Language and Literature	46	43.4
	American Culture and Literature	2	1.9
	English Translation and Interpretation	2	1.9
	Other	3	2.8
General Teaching Experience	Less than 2 years	3	2.8
	3-6 years	14	13.2
	7-10 years	20	18.9
	11 years and above	69	65.1
Writing Teaching Experience	Less than 2 years	17	16.0
	3-6 years	27	25.5
	7-10 years	21	19.8
	11 years and above	41	38.7
TOTAL		106	100

**Table 1.** Demographic Information of the Participants

As seen in Table 1, out of 106 instructors, 76 (71.7%) were female and 30 (28.3%) were male. In terms of their educational degree, 28 (26.4%) participants held BA, 54 (50.9%) participants held MA, and the rest (22.6%) held PhD degree. Most of the participants majored in English Language Teaching (46.2%) and English Language and Literature (43.4%) departments. 69 (65.1%) participants had more than 10 years of experience in teaching English in general and 41 (38.7%) participants had more than 10 years of experience in teaching English writing.

### Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Questionnaires and inventories are the most commonly used tools to investigate teachers' beliefs about teaching language in general and teaching some specific language skills such as writing, reading, and grammar (Borg, 2015). The inventory used in this study was Teachers' English Writing Beliefs Inventory (TEWBI) that was developed by Karaca and Uysal (2021) in an attempt to provide a comprehensive and sound inventory to investigate teachers' English writing beliefs in the field of L2 writing instruction. TEWBI is a 57-item inventory under three sub-scales: the nature of L2 writing (21 items), teaching L2 writing (21 items), and assessing L2 writing (15 items). More specifically, the nature of L2 writing sub-scale includes beliefs about the factors determining L2 writing performance, the role of L2 writing as a language skill, and whether writing knowledge can be transferred across languages. The sub-scale of teaching L2 writing includes beliefs about writing approaches, writing strategies, writing practices, writing tasks, and the role of extensive reading, model texts and technologies in writing instruction. The third sub-scale, assessing L2 writing includes beliefs about writing assessment practices, scoring criteria, portfolio assessment, the use of rubric and new technologies, and the role of feedback. A six-point Likert scale was employed to elicit teachers' beliefs (1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= slightly disagree, 4= partly agree, 5= agree, and 6= strongly agree). In the original study, the reliability value of TEWBI was found to be .94 which shows that it has a high reliability (.85 for the nature of L2 writing, .90 for teaching L2 writing, and .84 for assessing L2 writing). In the current study, the reliability coefficient was .91 (.79 for the nature of L2 writing, .88 for teaching L2 writing, and .75 for assessing L2 writing). A new section was added to obtain demographic



information about the participants including their gender, age, educational degree, B.A. major, general teaching experience, and writing teaching experience. The inventory was prepared on Google Docs and its link was delivered to the participants via email and WhatsApp Messenger after Ethical permission (22.04.2021-E-26014373-050.01.04-123993) was obtained from Karadeniz Technical University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee.

Furthermore, semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with 12 voluntary instructors who completed the inventory. The qualitative data obtained from the interviews helped to gain further insights into the instructors' beliefs about English writing and to triangulate it with the quantitative data obtained from the inventory. Six semi-structured interview questions were generated parallel to the inventory items and some follow-up questions were added when it was necessary to get further explanation on the answers. The interviews were conducted using an online video conferencing application, Google Meet.

#### Data Analysis

Quantitative data obtained through the Likert-scale inventory items were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25. The mean, standard deviation, and a percentage of the participants' answers to the inventory items were analysed through descriptive statistics.

Qualitative data obtained through semi-structured interviews were analysed based on the Grounded Theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) as it allows the researchers to develop codes and categories based on the emerging patterns rather than predetermined ones through constant comparisons (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The first author of the study compiled the student answers under each question. Then, the researcher read through the data several times in order to get a general sense, looking for both similarities and differences in the data. Then, the similar data were grouped under a category. New data was constantly compared to previous data and placed in the relevant category. The categories were presented under the themes of research questions such as beliefs about the nature of L2 writing, beliefs about teaching L2 writing, and beliefs about assessing L2 writing. In an attempt to check the accuracy of the findings, a PhD candidate who was experienced in EFL writing and qualitative data analysis was asked to form codes out of the same data after she was informed about the nature of the study. The researcher and the second coder agreed on more than 90% of the codes obtained from the data. Coding discrepancies were reviewed together and resolved through discussion.

#### Results

# Quantitative Results Obtained from the Inventory

In the current study, the quantitative data were obtained through the participants' responses to 57 Likertscale items of the TEWBI in order to identify the Turkish EFL instructors' beliefs about writing regarding the three subscales of the inventory (i.e., the nature of L2 writing, teaching L2 writing, and assessing L2 writing). While explaining the results, the percentages given under the categories of strongly disagree and disagree, strongly agree and agree were taken together in order to better understand the general tendencies in the instructors' beliefs about writing.

The nature of L2 writing subscale aimed to investigate how EFL teachers conceptualize and interpret writing as a distinct language skill. Turkish EFL instructors mostly agreed with all of the beliefs mentioned in this subscale. The instructors believed that writing is a medium for communication with the reader (93.4%), self-expression (92.5%), self-discovery of ideas and feelings (89.6%), information transfer (83.9%), and acquisition of advanced language competencies (82.1%). 83.9% of the instructors agreed that writing is a system composed of words, clauses, and sentences that are structured based on specific rules. The instructors also viewed writing as a socially situated activity (89.7%), and reported that writing conventions change from one social context to another (93.4%). Moreover, they believed that writing skills can be learned through instruction, practice (83.9%), and revising multiple times (91.5%). Similarly, 69.8% of them held the belief that writing is a recursive process in which writers go back and forth among planning, writing, and revising. This indicates that the instructors did not see writing as a linear process. This part of the inventory also examined the instructors' beliefs about the factors determining students' writing performance. The instructors agreed that discourse level competencies (67%), possessing appropriate thinking and reasoning skills (91.5%), and students' writing ability in general (68.9%) are important for their writing performance in English. With regards to the impact of cultural factors on students' writing performance, 52.8% of the participants expressed agreement. The instructors also valued the affective



factors (e.g., motivation) in writing performance. 91.5% of the participants believed that motivation is essential for effective writing and 63.3% of them thought writing as an internally motivated activity. Furthermore, the instructors reported that limited English proficiency (83%) and inadequate knowledge of writing strategies (91.2%) negatively impact students' writing performance. Finally, the subscale asked the instructors' beliefs about whether writing knowledge and strategies can be transferred across languages. 53.8% of the participants believed that English writing knowledge and skills can be transferred to Turkish writing, whereas 74.5% of them thought that Turkish writing strategies can be transferred to English writing.

The second subscale of the inventory aimed to investigate teachers' beliefs about teaching L2 writing. Turkish EFL instructors highly agreed with the beliefs stated in this part of the inventory, except for one item. First of all, the instructors reported a strong agreement on the necessity of explicit writing instruction as a part of English writing courses (93.4). With regards to writing approaches, 88.6% of the participants were in favour of adopting a mixture of more than one approach while teaching writing. Majority of the participants favoured process approach to writing (88.7%) and stated that teachers should teach their students the rewriting, revising, and editing stages of writing process (91.5%). Although 79.2% of the participants reported that genre knowledge development is important in writing instruction, nearly all of them expressed agreement with the belief that various genres of writing should be practiced with students (97.2%). As for product approach to writing instruction, 63.2% of the instructors expressed strong agreement on emphasizing surface-level conventions (e.g., grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc.) in writing instruction. However, with regard to teaching English writing conventions (e.g., thesis statement, topic sentence, deductive organization, etc.), 95.3% of the participants expressed their agreement. In the same vein, 96.3% agreed that English writing strategies should be taught through explicit modelling. In addition, majority of the instructors believed that guided writing practices are necessary for students to gain accuracy in writing (84%) and extensive practice under expert guidance helps students improve their writing performance (82%). Moreover, 94.3% of the participants held the belief that students should be given opportunities to develop their individual voice in writing classes. Similarly, 97.2% of the instructors favoured creative writing activities to develop writing performance. Besides, 90.6% thought that teachers should adapt writing tasks in a way that suits learners' real-world writing needs. In the same vein, 87.7% of the participants believed that authentic text models should be used in teaching English writing. They also stated that proper textual borrowings should be taught to students, which is important to avoid plagiarism (91.5%). As well as printed materials, the use of other kinds of teaching materials (audio, video, digital) was favoured by 88.7% of the participants. Likewise, the use of technologies in writing instruction was thought to be necessary by 92.5% of the participants. The instructors also expressed their belief that extensive reading should be integrated with writing instruction as writing ability cannot be acquired alone (90.6%). Furthermore, 82.1% of the instructors believed that collaborative writing opportunities should be provided to students. Yet, regarding the social and cultural factors that shape English writing, 48.1% of the participants expressed agreement that these factors should be the focus of writing instruction.

The third subscale of the inventory investigated teachers' beliefs about assessing L2 writing. Majority of the instructors believed that ongoing assessment practices should be employed in writing instruction (82.1%), and students' writing ability should be assessed through collecting multiple writing samples (87.7%) and including both in-class and out-of-class writing activities (86.8%). The instructors reported that selfassessment as well as teacher assessment should be included in writing instruction in order to give students the opportunity to evaluate their own performance (72.6%). With regards to portfolio assessment, 61.3% of the participants viewed it as the best way of assessing students' writing ability. In addition, nearly all of the participants believed that teachers should use rubrics that describe different dimensions of writing in assessing writing (96.2%). In the same vein, %88.7 of the participants thought it is necessary to apply explicit and systematic scoring criteria to ensure fair assessment. Related to the type of scoring, 46.2% agreed that writing texts should be scored holistically since writing is a single entity. In addition, only 25.5% of the instructors believed that only one aspect of writing should be assessed at a time, whereas 35.9% disagreed with that. With respect to feedback, a great majority of the participants held the belief that corrective feedback is effective in developing students' revision and self-editing skills (87.7%) and it is crucial in assisting students to move through the stages of the writing process (95.3%). Besides, 53.8% of the participants agreed on the effectiveness of teacher written feedback in writing instruction. However,



15.1% viewed teacher written feedback as the least effective way of feedback. Moreover, 67.9% of the participants thought that students can receive more focused and comprehensible feedback through teacherstudent conferences than they do through written feedback. Regarding the integration of new technologies into writing instruction to provide feedback, 85.9% of the participants reported their agreement. Furthermore, 61.3% agreed that peer feedback should be included in writing instruction.

# **Qualitative Findings Obtained from the Semi-structured Interviews**

Semi-structured interviews with a sub-sample of 12 participants were conducted to gain further insights into the instructors' beliefs about English writing. The findings are presented below under the themes of research questions with representative quotations taken from the interviews.

## Instructors' Beliefs about the Nature of L2 Writing

The twelve instructors all reported that writing was a means of expressing one's thoughts and feelings, sharing information, and communicating with the reader. They added that writing was the product of a learner's all knowledge and skills in the target language, and thus teachers could see their students' strengths and weaknesses in the target language by looking at their written products. In this regard, one of the instructors made the following comment by comparing writing to the other productive skill, speaking:

Students can demonstrate their proficiency in the target language through writing because they have to put into practice their knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation while writing. In addition, students have the opportunity to think over the correctness of their products in writing, so writing provides a more accurate picture of language proficiency than speaking.

Five instructors argued that writing should be practiced in the later stages of language instruction because students had to develop their knowledge of grammar and vocabulary in order to create written products. Three instructors stressed that the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary was not enough since effective writing required creative and critical thinking skills as well. As one of them stated, "the students who have difficulty in generating ideas about a specific topic cannot produce effective writing even if they are excellent in grammar and vocabulary because they have nothing to convey to the reader".

All of the instructors agreed that writing could be learned through practice and explicit instruction of writing conventions and strategies although learning how to write was one of the most difficult aspects of language learning. Four of them explained that writing instruction, on its own, was not enough to improve learners' writing skills since they regarded language as a whole system of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. One of them reported that, "students' writing skills will improve as their general language proficiencies improve". However, they mostly related writing with reading stressing that "reading provides the input that is necessary for writing".

Interestingly, one of the instructors emphasized the connection between writing in the native language and writing in the target language and expressed his thoughts in the following words:

Turkish students generally find it difficult to write in the target language as they lack the ability to write in their own language. If students are encouraged to write in their native language, this can help them write better in the target language. Writing conventions are generally similar in Turkish and English, so they can be transferred from one to another.

### Instructors' Beliefs about Teaching L2 Writing

The instructors all expressed their beliefs that an explicit writing instruction was necessary for students to improve their writing skills. They valued both process and product in L2 writing. They confessed that product was the main focus of writing instruction in Turkish higher education since EFL students were expected to develop products in different types of writing (e.g., opinion, narrative, argumentative, etc.). They added that process was also of equal importance because written products were developed by going through the process of planning, drafting, and revising. One of the instructors expressed his opinions on this issue as follows:

Yes, we teach our students how to develop a product appropriate to the given type of writing, but we should also teach them that writing is a process including the stages of outlining, drafting, and revising. If writing instruction is only product oriented, students will not be able to use their creative thinking skills to generate ideas, instead they will learn to imitate the ideas and expressions given



in the model texts. Emphasizing the process of writing will enable students to create new products in similar situations.

The instructors all valued prewriting activities in order to prepare students for the writing task. They stated that reading informative texts, watching videos, conducting web search, brainstorming in small groups or as a class were among the prewriting activities which would help students generate ideas on the assigned topic. One of the instructors expressed her thoughts using the following words:

I believe that when enough time is spent for prewriting activities and students are encouraged to generate ideas without judging for accuracy, even the students with poor language proficiency will be able to produce effective writing. At this stage, teachers should take a great responsibility for creating a motivating atmosphere in the class to facilitate idea generation.

Eight out of twelve instructors considered that teachers should provide students with model texts related to the type of writing being studied. They thought that teachers should analyse model texts with students in order to familiarize them with the writing conventions that are specific to the given type. They expressed that analysing model texts to identify topic sentence, supporting ideas, and concluding elements was helpful for students. They also believed that teachers should serve as a model for their students taking part in brainstorming and planning activities.

All instructors were positive about using technology in writing instruction. However, they held different beliefs regarding at what stage of writing instruction technology should be used. Half of the instructors believed that students could benefit from technology only at the prewriting stage when they were conducting web search on the writing task. The other instructors thought that students could also make use of technological devices while drafting and submitting their writings. One of the instructors commented that "today's students like using technological devices in all situations, thus teachers should integrate these devices into their writing instruction in order to increase their students' motivation towards writing". Moreover, only two instructors mentioned using some online platforms (e.g., Google Classroom) where students can submit their writings and teachers can give feedback on students' submissions.

# Instructors' Beliefs about Assessing L2 Writing

The twelve instructors all believed that feedback was crucial for students to improve their writing skills though it required an enormous time and energy for teachers. They expressed that thanks to feedback, students could see their errors and learn how to correct them before they fossilize. One of the instructors reported that "writing instruction is meaningless without feedback because students cannot see the areas that need improvement in their writing so they do not make an effort for this". Moreover, they stated that feedback was necessary to inform students whether the message they were trying to convey was properly delivered to the reader. One of the instructors provided the following comment:

The purpose of writing is to convey information, thoughts, and feelings to the reader. Feedback shows students to what extend their messages are understood by the reader. That motivates students to express their ideas more clearly using more correct language structures and more appropriate expressions.

The instructors added that teachers should also ask for second drafts from students in order to see whether students could clear up the problems in their writings using the given feedback because some students might need further feedback. Moreover, one of the instructors expressed her beliefs that giving feedback only on the final product was not effective because "writing is a process and every stage of this process is valuable". She emphasized that teacher guidance was crucial throughout the process, thus teachers should start giving feedback to their students at the prewriting stage.

The instructors all agreed that teachers were mainly responsible for giving feedback to students and teacher feedback was the most effective type of feedback. Half of the instructors believed that peer-feedback was the second most effective way of feedback reporting that "students are likely to learn from their friends' mistakes" and "students can explain their friends' mistakes better than the teacher because they experience similar language-learning processes". They also stated that peer-feedback should be integrated with teacher feedback because "students need to receive feedback from someone who is more proficient than themselves". Only one of the instructors considered that self-correction was effective for students.



Furthermore, the instructors mentioned that teacher feedback should focus on content as well as form because they thought that "meaning is more important than creating error-free sentences in writing".

All of the instructors expressed that students' writing performance should be assessed by considering all writing tasks they submitted during the term rather than looking at the results obtained from one or two timed exams because writing was a process including planning, drafting, and revising and students' efforts throughout the process were precious. In addition, six instructors stated that writing portfolio assessment was the best to reveal the development of students' writing skills throughout the process. One of the instructors commented that "as a writing teacher, I want to see to what extend my students have improved their writing skills from earlier drafts to the final drafts because I think this improvement is more valuable than getting a high mark in the final exam."

The instructors all reported that teachers should use a rubric while assessing written products in order to provide a consistent and fair assessment because they considered writing assessment as a subjective phenomenon. They emphasized that the rubric should consist of detailed and explicit descriptors and it should be shared with students beforehand. Regarding the type of rubric, majority of the instructors favoured analytic rubrics since they provide a more detailed picture of students' strengths and weaknesses than holistic rubrics. Only two instructors favoured holistic rubrics as they are more practical to use.

#### **Discussion**

The results obtained from the inventory and semi-structured interviews will be integrated in this section in order to address each research question.

# Discussion of the Findings for the First Research Question

Regarding the first research question which asked the instructors' beliefs about the nature of L2 writing, the data obtained from the inventory indicated that the instructors held a strong belief that writing was a tool for writers to communicate with readers, to express their ideas and feelings, and to transfer information on a specific topic. The instructors expressed similar beliefs in their interviews as well. This result contradicts that of Eftehkar's (2014) study in which majority of the instructors expected their students to produce grammatically correct sentences rather than building a social relationship with readers. However, it should be noted that during the interviews most of the instructors reported that writing was the product of students' knowledge about the target language including grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation. This belief implies that the instructors emphasize the accurate use of language while producing written texts as it was revealed in the studies by Eftehkar (2014) and Khanalizadeh (2012). In the current study, the results of the inventory showed that the instructors mostly viewed writing as a socially situated activity which suggests that written texts are constructed for a particular context and audience, and writing conventions change according to the context and the audience. This result is congruent with the findings of Kim's (2015) study in which the social and cultural dimension of L2 writing was prominently accepted by the respondents. In addition, more than half of the instructors in the present study believed that cultural factors impact students' writing performance, which was in line with the findings of Kim's (2015) study.

The instructors expressed their beliefs that writing can be learned through instruction and practice both in the inventory and in the interviews. In the same vein, in Khanalizadeh's (2012) study, the teachers confessed that the proverb "practice makes perfect" best worked for writing skill. Similarly, Grabe and Kaplan (1996) suggested that "writing skill does not come naturally; it is gained through conscious effort and much practice" (p.6). During the interviews, the instructors reported that learning how to write was one of the most difficult parts of L2 learning as it was stated by Hyland (2003, p. xiii) and approved by the teachers in Khanalizadeh's (2012) study. They explained that students needed both the knowledge of grammar and vocabulary and creative thinking skills to produce effective writing. They emphasized that limited English proficiency impacted writing performance more negatively than the lack of creativity. That contrasts with Yang's (2013) research findings which showed that the teachers believed that students' thinking was more important than their linguistic knowledge to make writing clear and meaningful.

## Discussion of the Findings for the Second Research Question

The results of the inventory regarding the second research question which asked the instructors' beliefs about teaching L2 writing demonstrated that the instructors embraced process approach to L2 writing instruction because they frequently expressed strong agreement with the five inventory items that are



related to the process approach. As a summary of these five items, the instructors believed that writing teachers should view writing as a process including the stages of planning, drafting, revising, and editing rather than a product and should teach these stages to their students through explicit modelling. The interview data supported this belief as well. These findings are interesting because previous studies showed that process approach was not common in EFL writing classes in Turkey (Uysal, 2008). Instructors' beliefs might have changed over time. However, in the interviews, they stated that writing product is also as important as writing process since developing written products appropriate to the given type is generally the main purpose of writing instruction in Turkish universities. In the same vein, more than half of the instructors believed that surface-level conventions (e.g., spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, grammar, etc.) should be emphasized in writing instruction in order to improve students' writing quality. These findings indicate that the instructors cannot disregard product-oriented approach to writing which regards writing as the product of the writer's linguistic and lexical knowledge (Hyland, 2003). This might be due to the instructors were more likely taught through audio-lingual behaviourist approach in their undergraduate education (Karaca, 2018).

Furthermore, the instructors frequently agreed with the belief statements that are related to the genre approach to writing instruction. Although nearly all of the instructors embraced the belief that various genres (e.g., essay, CV, letter of complaint, etc.) should be practiced in writing classes, relatively fewer instructors agreed that genre knowledge development should be one of the significant dimensions of writing instruction. The instructors might have thought that raising students' awareness of various genres is more important than equipping them with detailed knowledge about genres (Karaca, 2018). However, it should be noted that when the instructors were asked for their beliefs about effective writing instruction during the interview sessions, neither of them mentioned about providing genre knowledge or practicing different genres in writing classes. Therefore, it might be inferred that the instructors notice the importance of genre approach to writing but they lack the knowledge and skills to practice it in their classes. All of these findings show that Turkish EFL instructors favour adopting a mixture of more than one approach in teaching writing but it is not certain whether they have necessary knowledge and skills to apply different approaches in their classes.

In the nature of L2 writing subscale, the instructors mostly stated the belief that writing could be taught through instruction and in the teaching L2 writing subscale they expressed that writing instruction should be explicit. They reported the same beliefs in the interviews explaining that writing is the most problematic aspect of language teaching and students can improve their writing skills on condition that writing strategies and conventions are taught explicitly. The instructors mostly expressed the belief that writing instruction should be supported with extensive reading both in the inventory and in the interviews. The connection between reading and writing was also supported by the results of the previous studies which showed that self-initiated reading had an important impact on writing performance (Lee, 2005). In addition, the instructors favoured presenting and analysing text models in teaching writing like the teachers in Eftehkar's (2014) and Khanalizadeh's (2012) studies. With regards to the integration of technology into writing instruction, a majority of the instructors expressed their agreement in the inventory and the interview extracts supported this belief as well. Most of the instructors who participated in the interviews emphasized the use of technology to help students generate ideas in the prewriting stage. Only two instructors mentioned using some online platforms (e.g., Google Classroom) which allow students to submit their writings and enable teachers to give feedback on students' submissions. Based on this finding, it might be inferred that the instructors do not have enough knowledge and skills to integrate technology into different stages of the writing process and to use technology for interaction and collaboration.

### Discussion of the Findings for the Third Research Question

With regards to the third research question asking the instructors' beliefs about assessing L2 writing, the instructors expressed their beliefs that students' writing performance should be assessed through ongoing assessment practices, collecting multiple samples of writing, and integrating in-class (timed) and out-of-class (untimed) writing in both the inventory and the interviews. This indicates that the instructors are conscious of the fact that assessing writing through one-shot exams which require students to create only one product under time and place constraints is not true and fair as they stated in the interviews. However, only slightly more than half of the instructors wholeheartedly favoured portfolio assessment which rely on



process and genre approaches. This result is parallel with that of Valizadeh's (2019) study and somewhat different from the results of Crusan's (2016) study where majority of the participants favoured portfolio assessment. Combining this result with the findings of the second research question, it might be inferred that although Turkish EFL instructors are aware of the importance of process and genre approaches to writing instructions, they might not have the necessary knowledge and expertise to apply these approaches properly in teaching and assessing writing.

Both the inventory and the interviews demonstrated that the instructors strongly embraced the beliefs that instructors should use rubrics and apply explicit and systematic scoring criteria while assessing students' writing performance in order to provide a reliable and fair assessment. In the interviews, the instructors confessed that writing assessment is subjective as the participants in Valizadeh's (2019) study stated. They also thought that instructors should share the rubric and explain the scoring criteria to their students in order to increase their awareness of the teacher's expectations. However, regarding the type of rubric, the instructors divided between holistic and analytic rubrics. Each type of scoring has its own advantages and disadvantages and teachers should decide which one to use according to the purpose and context of the writing assessment (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). At this point it should be noted that, during the interviews, it was noticed that nearly half of the instructors were not sure about the difference between holistic and analytic scoring. This might be because the instructors did not receive sufficient writing assessment training to increase their writing assessment literacy during the pre-service training and through in-service training courses (Wang, 2020).

The instructors considered corrective feedback as a crucial component of writing instruction since it decreases students' future mistakes. This result is consistent with what Ekin-Balçıkanlı and Şakrak (2019) found in their study. Slightly more than half of the instructors disagreed with the inventory item that "teacher feedback might be the least effective form of feedback", which indicates that the instructors believed the effectiveness of teacher feedback. The interview extracts also showed that the instructors mostly valued teacher feedback rather than the other feedback delivery modes, which is in line with the findings of the previous studies (Ekin-Balçıkanlı & Şakrak, 2019; Lee, 2005). In addition, the interview data revealed that the instructors viewed indirect feedback more effective than direct feedback and favoured using error-codes while giving feedback as it makes students think about their errors. This finding is similar to the findings reported in several previous studies (Ekin-Balçıkanlı & Şakrak, 2019; Lee, 2009), whereas it contradicts with that of Mao's (2019) study where majority of the participants favoured direct feedback. Furthermore, they valued the affective dimension of feedback and emphasized that instructors should praise students' strengths as well as demonstrating errors in order not to demotivate them as it was revealed in Zan and Yiğitoğlu's (2012) study. Regarding the use of technology in providing feedback, majority of the instructors expressed agreement in the inventory. During the interview sessions, they frequently mentioned using Microsoft Word to give feedback on drafts. Thus, it might be inferred that Turkish EFL teachers are not familiar with various online programs which can provide automated feedback on drafts (e.g., Grammarly, Criterion, My Access, etc.) and allow students to conduct collaborative writing activities (e.g., Etherpad, Padlet, etc.).

# Conclusion

In the light of the results of this study, it was concluded that Turkish university EFL instructors are aware of the importance of the process-oriented and genre-oriented approaches to writing although they cannot disregard the product-oriented approach. It can be speculated that the instructors were taught through the product-oriented approach in their undergraduate education or they do not have necessary knowledge and expertise to apply process-oriented and genre-oriented approaches in writing instruction. It was also concluded that even though the instructors favour using technology in teaching and assessing writing, they might not have enough knowledge and skills to integrate various digital tools into the different stages of the writing process. In addition, it was found that the instructors are not familiar with the writing assessment terminology and they lack the knowledge to make a distinction between different scoring methods (i.e., holistic or analytic). Moreover, the instructors do not have strong beliefs about portfolio assessment although they believe that assessing writing through one-shot exams is not fair. In terms of feedback, the instructors regard teacher feedback as the most effective way of feedback and they do not have strong beliefs about the importance of peer feedback and self-assessment in writing instruction. Teacher trainers and program designers should take these beliefs into consideration while developing teacher training programs. These beliefs are also crucial for any educational reform or innovation to take place.



Based on these findings, it is suggested that Turkish EFL instructors could be provided with a professional training on different approaches to writing, using digital tools in the different stages of writing instruction, writing assessment terminology, and different approaches to assessing writing both during their preservice education and through in-service teacher development programs. EFL instructors also need training on portfolio assessment that relies on process-oriented and genre-oriented approaches. Moreover, the knowledge about self-assessment and peer feedback should be given in teacher training programs because engaging students in self-assessment and peer-feedback practices will help students improve their learning as a result of increasing their sense of responsibility and autonomy in learning (Hawe & Dixon, 2014, as cited in Valizadeh, 2019). In other words, Turkish EFL instructors should be provided with a specific training on writing instruction since pre-service teachers are trained as language teachers in general and do not receive a professional and explicit writing teacher training in Turkish higher education (Karaca, 2018). In the same vein, majority of the participants confessed that their beliefs about writing are based on the books or articles they have read and their previous teachers' writing instruction practices. Only few of them mentioned the role of in-service seminars or workshops on their writing beliefs. Therefore, it is sure that there is a need for a professional writing teacher training along with practical demonstration on how to apply different approaches to teaching and assessing writing in Turkish universities so that EFL instructors can achieve both theoretical and practical knowledge to practice what they have learnt.

#### **Limitations and Recommendations**

It should be noted that there are some limitations to this study. First, purposive sampling might lower the generalizability of the results. Second, the study is merely based on the instructors' self-reported beliefs about writing. Future studies could include classroom observations to better understand what teachers actually do inside their classrooms because teachers' practices might not be completely compatible with their self-reported beliefs. Finally, the study relied only on the instructors' beliefs about writing. Future studies should investigate students' beliefs in order to see the consistency between instructors' and students' beliefs about writing.

#### **Author Contribution Rates:**

1. Author %50, 2. Author %50 contributed to the study.

### **Conflict of Interest**

There is no financial conflict of interest with any institution, organization, person related to our article titled "An Investigation of Turkish EFL Instructors' Beliefs about Writing in English" and there is no conflict of interest between the authors.

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### Genişletilmiş Özet

Öğretmenlerin eğitim uygulamalarını ve bu uygulamaların altında yatan gerekçeleri anlamak için öğretmenlerin sahip oldukları inançları anlamak önemlidir. Öğretmenlerin inançlarının ortaya çıkarılması, öğretmen yetiştirme programları tasarlayan öğretmen eğitimcilerine öğretmen adaylarının eğitim ihtiyaçlarını belirlemek için rehberlik etmesi açısından da önemlidir. Ayrıca öğretmenler herhangi bir eğitim reformunu veya yeniliği ancak mevcut inanç sistemlerine uygun olması koşuluyla benimseyebilirler. Bu anlamda, bir öğretmen eğitimi reformuna başlamadan önce öğretmenlerin inançlarını ortaya çıkarmak ve değiştirmek gereklidir. Bu sebeplerden dolayı öğretmen inançlarının araştırılması son 30 yılda yabancı dil öğretimi alanında yapılan pek çok çalışmaya konu olmuştur. Bu çalışmaların büyük çoğunluğu öğretmenlerin dil bilgisi öğretimine dair inançlarını incelerken, öğretmenlerin yazma becerisinin öğretilmesine dair inançlarını araştıran çalışmalar azınlıkta kalmıştır. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten Türk öğretim görevlilerinin İngilizce yazma becerisinin öğretimine yönelik inançlarını araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Bu çalışma, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten Türk öğretim görevlilerinin İngilizce yazmanın doğası, İngilizce yazma becerisinin öğretimi ve İngilizce yazma becerisinin değerlendirilmesi ile ilgili inançlarını psikometrik olarak güvenilir ve geçerli bir veri toplama aracı olan Karaca ve Uysal (2021) tarafından geliştirilen "Öğretmenlerin İngilizce Yazma İnançları Envanteri" aracılığıyla araştırmıştır. Envanterden elde edilen verilerin desteklenmesi ve incelenen olgunun daha iyi anlaşılması için yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla nitel veriler de toplanmıştır. Sonuç olarak, öğretmenlerin İngilizce Yazma İnançları Envanterinin alt boyutlarına dayalı olarak aşağıdaki araştırma soruları üretilmiştir:

1. İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten Türk öğretim görevlilerinin İngilizce yazmanın doğası hakkındaki inançları nelerdir?



- 2. İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten Türk öğretim görevlilerinin İngilizce yazmayı öğretme konusundaki inancları nelerdir?
- 3. İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten Türk öğretim görevlilerinin İngilizce yazmayı değerlendirme konusundaki inançları nelerdir?

Belirlenen araştırma sorularını cevaplandırmak için hem nicel hem de nitel veri toplama süreçlerini birleştiren karma bir araştırma deseni olan sıralı açıklayıcı model kullanılmıştır. İlk olarak, öğretim görevlilerinin İngilizce yazma konusundaki inançlarının genel olarak anlaşılması için nicel veriler toplanmış ve analiz edilmiştir. Daha sonra öğretim görevlilerinin yazmaya yönelik inancları hakkında daha fazla bilgi toplamak için nitel veriler toplanmış ve analiz edilmiştir. Araştırmanın nicel ve nitel aşamalarından elde edilen veriler tartışma kısmında birleştirilmiştir.

İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten toplam 106 Türk öğretim görevlisi envanteri cevaplamıştır. Öğretim görevlileri amaçlı örnekleme yoluyla seçilmiştir. Hepsi, Türkiye'deki çeşitli devlet üniversitelerinin Yabancı Diller Yüksekokulları ve İngiliz Dili Eğitimi ile İngiliz Dili ve Edebiyatı Bölümlerinde tam zamanlı İngilizce öğretim görevlileri olarak çalışmaktaydı ve yazma becerilerini öğretme konusunda en az bir dönem denevime sahiptiler. Calısmaya katılım gönüllü olduğu için envanteri tamamlamadan önce katılımcıların onavı alınmıstır.

Çalışmada kullanılan Öğretmenlerin İngilizce Yazma İnançları Envanteri toplam 57 maddeden oluşan üç alt boyuta sahip bir envanterdir: ikinci dilde yazmanın doğası (21 madde), ikinci dilde yazma becerisinin öğretimi (21 madde) ve ikinci dilde yazma becerisinin değerlendirilmesi (15 madde). Envanter, Google Dokümanlar üzerinde hazırlanmış olup, Karadeniz Teknik Üniversitesi Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Etik Kurulu'ndan Etik izin (22.04.2021-E-26014373-050.01.04-123993) alındıktan sonra e-posta ve WhatsApp Messenger aracılığıyla katılımcılara iletilmiştir. Ayrıca envanteri dolduran 12 gönüllü öğretim görevlisi ile yarı yapılandırılmış bireysel görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Görüşmeler, çevrimiçi bir video konferans uygulaması olan Google Meet kullanılarak yapılmıştır.

Likert ölçeğindeki envanter maddelerinden elde edilen nicel veriler, Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), versiyon 25 kullanılarak analiz edildi. Katılımcıların envanter maddelerine verdikleri yanıtların ortalaması, standart sapması ve yüzdeleri betimsel istatistiklerle analiz edildi. Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla elde edilen nitel veriler, araştırmacıların sürekli karşılaştırmalar yoluyla önceden belirlenmis olanlardan zivade ortava cıkan örüntülere dayalı kodlar ve kategoriler gelistirmelerine olanak tanıdığı için Temellendirilmiş Teori (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) temel alınarak analiz edilmiştir.

Bu calısmanın genel sonucları ısığında, Türk üniversitelerindeki İngilizce öğretim görevlilerinin, ürün odaklı yaklaşımı göz ardı edemeseler de, süreç odaklı ve tür odaklı yaklaşımların öneminin farkında oldukları sonucuna varılmıştır. Bunun sebebi olarak öğretim görevlilerinin lisans eğitimlerinde ürün odaklı yaklaşımla eğitim görmeleri veya yazma öğretiminde süreç odaklı ve tür odaklı yaklaşımları uygulayacak bilgi ve uzmanlığa sahip olmamaları söylenebilir. Öğretim görevlilerinin yazma öğretiminde ve değerlendirmede teknolojiyi kullanmayı tercih etmelerine rağmen, çeşitli dijital araçları yazma sürecinin farklı aşamalarına entegre etmek için yeterli bilgi ve beceriye sahip olmayabilecekleri sonucuna varılmıştır. Ayrıca öğretim görevlilerinin yazılı değerlendirme terminolojisine asina olmadıkları ve farklı puanlama yöntemleri (bütünsel veya analitik) arasında ayrım yapma konusunda güçlük çektikleri sonucuna varılmıştır. Bununla birlikte, öğretim görevlileri tek seferlik sınavlarla yazmanın değerlendirilmesinin adil olmadığına inansalar da portfolyo değerlendirmesi konusunda güçlü inançlara sahip değillerdir. Geri bildirim açısından, öğretim görevlileri öğretmen geribildirimini en etkili geribildirim yolu olarak görmekte ve yazma öğretiminde akran geribildirimi ve öz değerlendirmenin önemi konusunda güçlü inançlara sahip değildirler. Öğretmen yetistiricileri ve program tasarımcıları, öğretmen yetistirme programları gelistirirken bu inançları dikkate almalıdır. Bu inançlar, herhangi bir eğitim reformunun gerçekleşebilmesi için oldukça önemlidir.

Bu bulgulara dayalı olarak, İngilizceyi yabancı dil olarak öğreten Türk öğretim görevlilerine yazma öğretiminin farklı yaklaşımları, yazma öğretiminde dijital araçları kullanma ve yazma becerisini değerlendirme terminolojisi ile ilgili hem öğretmen adayı yetiştirme programları hem de hizmet içi öğretmen geliştirme programları aracılığıyla eğitim verilmesi önerilir. Öğretim göreylilerinin sürec odaklı ve tür odaklı yaklasımlara dayanan portfolyo değerlendirmesi konusunda da eğitime ihtiyaçları vardır. Ayrıca öğretmen yetiştirme programlarında öz değerlendirme ve akran geribildirimi ile ilgili bilgiler verilmelidir, çünkü öğrencileri öz değerlendirme ve akran geribildirim uygulamalarına dâhil etmek,



öğrencilerin sorumluluk duygularını ve öğrenmede özerkliklerini artırarak öğrenmelerini geliştirmelerine yardımcı olacaktır.