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A Review of New Istanbul B1 Level Textbook Writing Activities

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Abstract

Writing skill is seen as a complex and difficult skill compared to other language skills. In order to improve the writing skills of language learners, it is necessary to both diversify the writing activities and work with activities that include different methods. Considering that textbooks are the resources that learners and instructors can easily access in foreign language learning, textbooks should have diversity in terms of writing tasks and methods. The aim of this study is to determine the writing tasks in the textbooks used in teaching Turkish as a foreign language, the compatibility of these tasks with the B1 level skills determined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages, and the writing methods used in the activities. In the study, "New Istanbul B1 Level Textbook" is examined. First of all, the compatibility of writing activities in the book with CEFR B1 level writing skills was examined. Then, the writing methods used in the activities (controlled writing, guided writing, critical writing, fill-in-the-blank, etc.) were determined. In this study, document analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. In the study, it was concluded that New Istanbul B1 Level Textbook writing tasks were compatible with CEFR B1 level writing skills and different writing methods were used in writing tasks.

Key Words

Writing task • Writing methods • New Istanbul textbook • B1 level

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Learning a foreign language is an action that takes place for many reasons. In recent years, with the increase in the target group coming to Turkey for academic and economic purposes, teaching Turkish as a foreign language has become a remarkable area. Turkish is taught as a foreign language in Turkish teaching centers within universities, private language courses, and public education centers. In all institutions where Turkish is taught as a foreign language, textbooks serve as the primary source used by the instructor and the learner.

The acquisition of language skills depends on the work done in the areas of listening, reading, speaking and writing. In the prepared textbooks, activities related to related fields are included. For the purpose of learning the language, the number of activities related to the relevant field should be increased. Considering that there are many students who come to our country for academic purposes, the importance of writing skills for these students cannot be denied. Therefore, writing activities should support this skill both in number and quality. The purpose of the writing activities included in the books is to prepare the language learner for an event or situation he will encounter, and to offer the opportunity to cope with the situation. It is not possible to offer this opportunity to individuals who are different from each other by using the same methods. For this reason, different methods should be included while giving language learners the ability to write. The motivation of the student should be supported with explanations and directions.

There are studies in the literature on writing activities in the textbooks used in teaching Turkish to foreigners. Examples of these studies are Tok (2013), Yılmaz (2014), Çekici (2018), Yaylı and Yaylı (2018), Ekinci (2020). In the given studies, they focused on the place and importance of writing activities in the process of teaching Turkish as a foreign language, the number of writing activities in the textbooks they included in the study, the ratio of the number of writing activities to the activities for other skills, the methods used in writing activities, and the evaluation of writing activities in terms of writing approaches.

As a result of the examinations, no study has been found that determines the qualifications and deficiencies of the New Istanbul Turkish B1 Textbook writing activities for International Students, which are frequently used in language teaching, in teaching Turkish as a foreign language.

In this study, the writing activities in the New Istanbul Turkish for International Students B1 Textbook were examined in terms of their compatibility with the B1 level writing skills determined in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages and writing methods.

In line with the determined purpose, answers were sought to the following questions:

1. What are the activities in the writing sections of the New Istanbul Turkish for Foreigners B1 Textbook and are these writing activities compatible with CEFR writing skills?
2. What are the methods used in writing activities in the New Istanbul Turkish for Foreigners B1 Textbook?

Method

Research Design

This study was conducted in the form of document analysis, one of the qualitative research methods. Document analysis is a research method that includes the analysis of written materials containing information about the phenomenon or phenomena that are aimed to be researched (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this study, the writing activities in New Istanbul B1 were examined, the compatibility of the activities with the CEFR writing skill was examined, and the writing methods used in the activities were determined.

Sampling

The sampling of this study consists of the textbooks used in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Since it is used in many institutions, especially in Turkish teaching centers affiliated with universities, New Istanbul Turkish for Foreigners textbooks are determined as the sample, and B1 level textbooks are determined as the threshold level.

Data Collection and Analysis

Document analysis technique was used to analyze the data. Regarding the first sub-problem of the research, the writing activities in the examined textbook were determined and their compatibility with CEFR writing skills was examined. A table was created showing the activity and the associated writing skill. Skills not covered by the writing activities are also indicated. For the second sub-goal of the research; The writing methods used in the activities in the writing area in the units of the book examined were determined, and a table was created under the headings of "unit, subject, writing activity and method". Classification and digitization of the data was done through the prepared table. In addition, a graph was created showing the frequency of using the methods and their ratio in writing activities.

Findings

Findings were examined in order according to the sub-problems of the research.

Table 1

The Match between New Istanbul B1 Writing Activities with CEFR B1 Writing Skills

New Istanbul B1 Writing Activities	CEFR B1 Writing Skills
1A. Describing our house	Can give straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects within their field of interest.
1B. Writing a dialog about the division of labor	Can produce straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within their field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence. Can give a description of an event, a recent trip- real or imagined.
1C. Comparing his/her country and current life	Can produce very brief reports in a standard conventionalised format, which pass on routine factual information and state reasons for actions.
2A. Writing an email to apply for a job	Can compose basic e-mails/letters of a factual nature (e.g. to request information or to ask for and give confirmation). Can compose a basic letter of application with limited supporting details.

2B. Writing a success story	Can narrate a story.
2C. Telling our dream job	Can give a description of an event, a recent trip- real or imagined. Can produce a text on a topical subject of personal interest, using simple language to list advantages and disadvantages, and give and justify their opinion.
3A. Healthy diet	Can produce short, simple essays on topics of interest. Can summarise, report and give their opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non- routine matters within their field with some confidence.
3B. Writing text with numerical data	Can summarise, report and give their opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non- routine matters within their field with some confidence. Can present a topic in a short report or poster, using photographs and short blocks of text.
3C. Our fears	Can compose letters expressing different opinions and giving detailed accounts of personal feelings and experiences. Can compose personal letters describing experiences, feelings and events in some detail. Can take messages communicating enquiries and explaining problems.
4A. Advantages of studying at university	Can produce a text on a topical subject of personal interest, using simple language to list advantages and disadvantages, and give and justify their opinion.
4B. Writing an e-mail for information	Can compose basic e-mails/letters of a factual nature (e.g. to request information or to ask for and give confirmation).
4C. The importance of school, family and environment in education	Can give straightforward, detailed descriptions on a range of familiar subjects within their field of interest.
5A. Telling our dreams	Can give a description of an event, a recent trip- real or imagined.
5B. Telling our regrets	Can give accounts of experiences, describing feelings and reactions in simple, connected text.
5C. Writing a complaint e-mail	Can compose basic formal e-mails/letters (e.g. to make a complaint and request action).
6A. Cultural differences	Can produce straightforward connected texts on a range of familiar subjects within their field of interest, by linking a series of shorter discrete elements into a linear sequence. Can summarise, report and give their opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non- routine matters within their field with some confidence.
6B. Village and city life	Can produce a text on a topical subject of personal interest, using simple language to list advantages and disadvantages, and give and justify their opinion. Can summarise, report and give their opinion about accumulated factual information on familiar routine and non- routine matters within their field with some confidence.
6C. Writing an invitation letter	Can compose personal letters giving news and expressing thoughts about abstract or cultural topics such as music or film.

In the activity-skill matching, it was determined that the writing activities in the examined textbook were compatible with the Written Production and Written Interaction Skills determined in the CEFR.

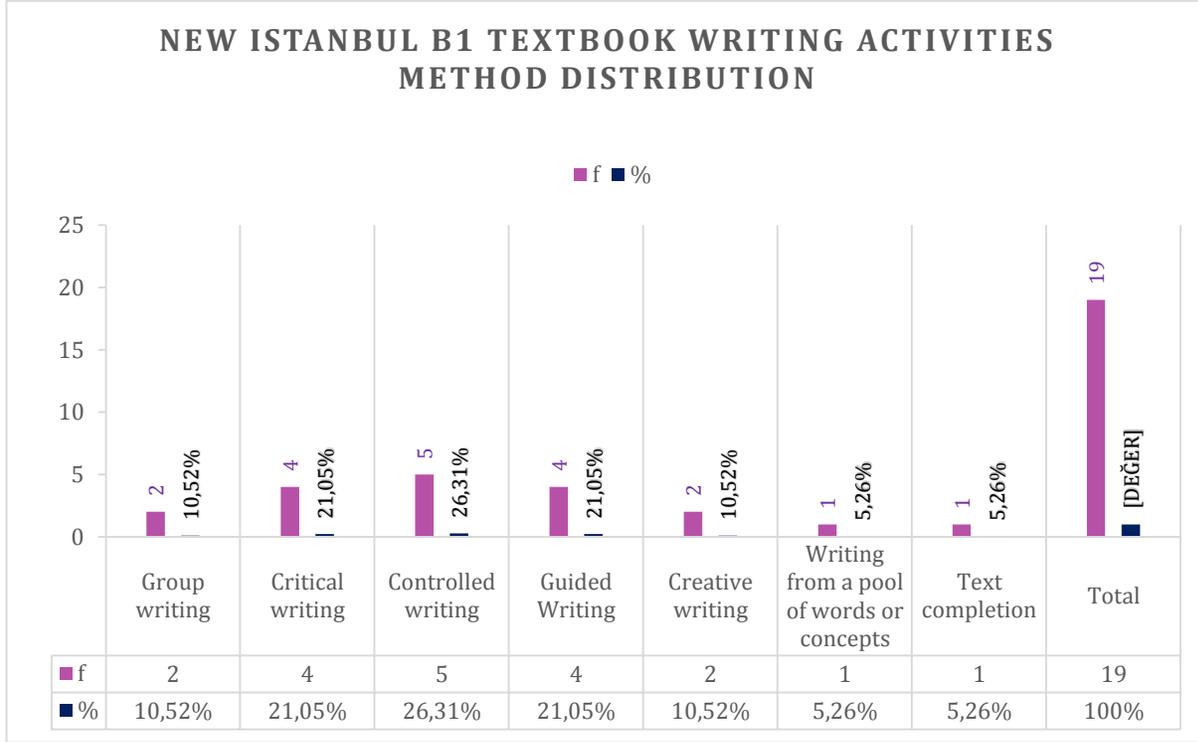
Table 2

New Istanbul B1 Textbook Writing Activities and Methods

Unit	Subject	Writing Activity	Method
1. A New Life	A. Moving B. Free Air Free Water C. Life in a New City	A. Explaining the features of our house B. Writing a division of labor dialogue C. Comparing your life in your country and now	A. Controlled writing B. Writing as a group C. Guided writing
2. Business Life	A. Business Life B. Success Stories C. Professions	A. Write an email to apply for a job posting B. Writing a success story C. Telling about our dream job	A. Controlled writing B. Controlled writing C. Creative writing
3. Health Comes First	A. Health Comes from the Throat B. Get Healing C. Mental Health	A. Healthy diet B. Writing text with numeric data C. Our fears	A. Critical writing B. Guided writing C. Guided writing
4. Education Life	A. University Life B. Learning Styles C. Education News	A. Advantages of studying at university B. Writing an e-mail for information C. The importance of school, family and environment in education	A. Critical writing B. Writing from a pool of words or concepts C. Critical writing
5. Our Dreams	A. People Live by Their Dreams B. Last Regret Doesn't Help C. Our Complaints	A. Telling our dreams B. Expressing our regrets C. Write a complaint e-mail	A. Controlled writing B. Text completion C. Guided writing/ Creative writing
6. A World Culture	A. Cultural Differences B. Lifestyles C. Festivals	A. Cultural differences B. Village and city life C. Write a letter of invitation	A. Controlled writing B. Critical writing C. Write as a group

The New Istanbul B1 textbook consists of six units. There are three different sections in each unit and a separate writing activity is included in each section. It was determined that different topics were included in the writing activities and seven different writing methods were used.

Figure 1

New Istanbul B1 Textbook Writing Activities Method Distribution

The number and frequency of use of the writing section activities in the New Istanbul B1 textbook are given in Figure 1. In the New Istanbul B1 textbook, group writing method is 10.52 %; 21.05% for critical writing method; 26.31% to the controlled writing method; 21.05% for guided writing method; 10.52% to the creative writing method; 5.26% to the writing method by choosing from the pool of words and concepts; text completion method was used at a rate of 5.26%. It was determined that control writing, guided writing and critical writing activities were used more frequently than other methods.

Conclusion

What are the activities in the writing sections of the New Istanbul Turkish for Foreigners B1 Textbook and are these writing activities compatible with CEFR writing skills? The following conclusions were reached regarding the question:

The New Istanbul B1 level textbook consists of six units and each unit consists of three parts. Writing activities are regularly included in each section. A total of 19 writing activities were included in the writing sections. Among the 19 activities, there are writing a dialogue, writing an e-mail, writing an invitation letter, writing an explanatory text, writing a comparative text, and writing a biography. It was concluded that different types of texts were included in the writing activities. In addition, it was seen that the writing activities examined were compatible with CEFR B1 level writing skills.

The other problem of the research is "Which writing methods are used in the writing activities in the New Istanbul Turkish for Foreigners B1 Textbook?" The following conclusions were reached regarding the question:

In the New Istanbul B1 textbook, the activities of the writing section are not quantitatively high, but it has been determined that many methods such as guided writing, controlled writing, creative writing, text completion, critical writing, writing by choosing from a word or concept pool are used in the activities. As [Tiryaki \(2013\)](#) stated in his study, different writing activities are of great importance in the textbooks used for teaching Turkish as a foreign language. The activities focused on creating paragraphs and writing texts. In writing studies, it is necessary to focus on how to write rather than what to write ([Çakar, 2010](#)). Expecting students to write by giving a topic that is compatible with the topic in the relevant unit of the textbook used as a source is not enough to improve writing skills. The student will not be able to determine how to write, what to talk about in which section, and will stay away from writing activities after a while. As a result, applied writing activities will not be productive. However, if the student is informed about how many paragraphs he should write and the topics that should be included in the paragraph, the process will progress in a positive way. In the examined book, the students were given a draft so that they could create paragraphs and texts, and necessary information and directions were given.

It was seen that the activity of "Telling our Dream Profession" in The 2nd Theme and the "Telling Our Dreams" activity in the 5th Theme were similar. It is thought that repetitive activities will not be interesting for students. (Raimes 1983; cited in [Tok 2013](#)), studies such as copying and sentence editing at basic levels; he mentions that guided writing and text completion studies can be at more advanced levels. It is thought that the examined textbook was prepared appropriately in this context.

In this study, only the writing tasks in the B1 level textbook from the New Istanbul Teaching Turkish to Foreigners textbooks were examined. The gaps in this study can be filled by examining other levels.

In this study, only the writing part activities were examined. Reading, listening and speaking sections can be studied.

Ethic

This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research Committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments.

Author Contributions

All of the authors contributed equally in the article.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest in the research.

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