

Full Length Research Paper

The use of “ask, write, throw” technique as a writing skill practice when teaching Turkish as a foreign language

Nazife Burcu TAKIL

Department of Turkish Education, Gazi University, Gazi Faculty of Education, Turkey.

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This investigation was done to explore the effectiveness of “Ask, write, throw” (AWT) technique in improving the writing skills of B2 level learners of Turkish as a foreign language compared to traditional teaching technique. To this end, 35 learners at similar levels were recruited. There were 18 learners in the AWT (experimental) group and 17 learners in the traditional technique (control) group. The investigation lasted for 8 weeks. Results clearly showed that the AWT technique significantly improved the learners’ writing skills compared to traditional techniques and principles. Learners in the AWT group were more successful in vocabulary, punctuation, relevancy in writing, form of constructed sentences and vocabulary error count. These findings demonstrate the effectiveness of “ask, write, throw” (AWT) technique in teaching Turkish as a foreign language compared to the traditional technique.

Key words: Turkish as a foreign language, writing skills, “Ask, write, throw” technique.

INTRODUCTION

Studies concerning teaching of Turkish as a foreign language date back to 11th century, when Mahmut of Kashgar wrote Compendium of the languages of the Turks to teach Turkish to Arab people of the age. The work contains grammar works, Turkish poetry and proverbs and it set its importance by implementing a methodological approach to teaching Turkish and having no similar source in the field at its time (Gülensoy, 2000). No rules or formulations can be observed in the work, as it aims to teach by exemplifying everything and the learner is expected to deduce the underlying structure. Thus, the book approaches language teaching as cultural

education, as it has copious amounts of oral culture oriented literature such as lullabies and poetry (Akalın, 2008; Göçer and Moğul, 2011). Another important work on teaching Turkish as a foreign language is from 14th century by Italians and Germans of the age, Codex Cumanicus. This book mainly contains Latin to Kipchak language and Persian dictionary. It was originally designed to teach Kipchak language and spread Christianity to Kipchak people. It focuses on mostly the spoken language of Kipchak Turks rather than the written literature (Ercilesun, 2010). In 15th century, to prove the superiority of Turkish language over Persian, Ali Şîr

E-mail: burcutakil@gmail.com.

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Nevâî wrote *Muhâkemetü'l-Lügatayn*, which included vital information about Turkish grammar and culture (Berber, 2010).

European works on teaching Turkish are generally based on grammar (Yeşilyurt, 2015). These works include mainly grammatical points rather than methods, techniques or approaches. However, considering the teaching of Turkish as a foreign language dates, there has not been much development and research in the last century. As Memiş and Erdem (2013) state: “There are various sources published in Turkish about methods of teaching foreign languages, but the methods and approaches within these sources usually differ, provide incomplete or conflicting information with other sources.” The studies concerning teaching Turkish as a foreign language gained the spotlight with the increased financial and political interactions of Turkey in recent years (Yağmur, 2013). Although today there are various sources like books, theses and articles on teaching Turkish as a foreign language, it is hard to say that they are enough or efficient. This is because teaching Turkish as a foreign language is a relatively new in academic field. The theoretical literature of the field is scarce, and applied research is far harder to be found (Hamaratli, 2015). Previous works are mostly on the approaches, techniques and principles in teaching English as a foreign language translated to Turkish, but Turkish and English are two completely different languages structurally and also culturally. From these standpoints, it can be seen that original and new approaches to Turkish language teaching are needed desperately in the field.

The current techniques used in teaching Turkish as a foreign language are translated from foreign sources and are as follows: grammar translation method, direct method, audio-lingual method, cognitive-code method, communicative approach, eclectic method, suggestopedia, community language learning, the silent way and total physical response (Hengirmen, 1993; Yayli and Bayyurt, 2011; Demircan, 2013; Güzel and Barın, 2013). Most of them were developed in order to teach western languages, thus creating a ground for developing newer approaches and dedicated techniques to teach languages other than only Indo-European languages. Every language has its own syntactic, morphological and phonetic structures so each need a dedicated methodology to be taught (Memiş and Erdem, 2013). For this purpose in the current investigation, having “language is for communication” as a basis, “ask, write, throw” technique was used for teaching Turkish as a foreign language. This method aims to create a communicational environment to improve writing skills of the learners.

Communication is considered to be a vital necessity for human nature. Humans of 21st century feel the need to express themselves and their needs in various different scenarios and environments, and that leads to foreign language learning to be a must for communication.

Oxford (1990:18-21) states that every language learning strategy is to have a communicational intelligibility and lists these features of language learning strategies: It contributes towards the main goal of communication, helps learners to be more independent, expands teacher’s role, is problem-oriented, is a collection of actions by the learners, not only involves cognitive functions but several aspects, supports learning directly or indirectly, is not always observable, is generally a set of conscious acts, is teachable and expandable, is affected by various factors (Oxford, 1990: 9). Taking these principals as a starting point, “ask, write, throw” technique was designed and developed to improve writing skills of the learners of Turkish as a foreign language. In this method, rather than writing complete essays with introductions and conclusions, the focus was on simple set of sentences used to mainly communicate in daily interactions. Rico (2000) states that just by knowing the alphabet, arranging the letters to produce words in a correct punctuation and grammar or creating words that have static meanings are not enough for writing. Murcia (1991: 233) defines writing as a person’s ability to most strongly express their main purpose and thoughts in their mother tongue or a different language, and adds “even most people whose mother tongue is English do not possess this skill” to shed light on how arduous it is to write and how a problematic situation exists in the minds of people. Judging from Murcia’s statements, it would be beneficial to take writing skills teaching when teaching a foreign language in a functional basis would be a correct course.

Flower (1996: 62) states that writing is a cognitive activity and rains information to the short term memory. Doğan (2012: 176) suggests rather than memorization or mechanical activities, learning takes place with active memory building techniques and imitation. These findings point that improving writing skills in a foreign language should be a cognitive experience as well as being an active memory building or imitation-allowing activity to build up learning. “Ask, write, throw” technique allows students to see their peers’ sentences to imitate, dynamically interact, and receive feedback to improve on their writing skills, thus creating an effective and permanent learning environment.

Learners are given freedom in “ask, write, throw” technique to write whatever they want to whomever they want. They are involved in the activity utilizing their cognitive, sensual and psychomotor skills. Its sensual aspects are the learners’ self-confidence, not being afraid to write, and to socialize with their friends; whereas the psychomotor skills that are involved are writing their sentences and questions and folding them into snowballs and throwing them to their friends can be listed.

In foreign language learning, in order for the cognitive skills to be improved, sensual readiness is required, as hesitancy and anxiety negatively affect the process of learning. Allwright and Bailey (1991: 175) suggest that

foreign language learners find themselves in a completely different situation with the language they learn, and they have a tendency to process this environment as a threat to them and to their identity, making foreign language learning a horror show rather than an excitement. Horwitz (1986:560) and Horwitz and Cope (1986: 125) found that a lot of people had mental blocks when it comes to learning a new language. Their study suggests that even people who are highly motivated on other subjects such as mathematics, science and music found it hard to be motivated when it comes to learning a new language, stating that it is a stressful experience to learn in a classroom. This makes creating and developing techniques to reduce the anxiety levels in a foreign language learning environment a vital necessity. "Ask, write, throw" technique was developed in light of these points. "Ask, write, throw"(AWT) technique was designed to implement an environment where learners can interact via writing, come across new sentences and vocabulary, feel free and relaxed, not under pressure and socialize through the dynamic environment in the learning process. This method starts with learners writing questions on a piece of paper (e.g How are you? Do you want to go to the cinema? What's your favorite book?) to be asked to their friends. Then throw the piece of paper where the recipient answers the question and writes a new one. This accommodates the circulation of asking questions, writing and throwing. This method was designed to lower the affective filter thus allowing learners to overcome their anxiety, prejudice, and difficulties in learning. This way learners improve both cognitively (asking questions, writing, responding) and sensually (interacting with their friends, being actively involved in the lesson).

METHODS

In this section, the research method, participants, tools of measurement and analysis, and information of the detailed analysis of the data are elaborated.

Research model

In this research, "ask, write, throw" technique is handled in teaching Turkish as a foreign language, and its effect on writing skills is determined upon 8 weeks of application. In this regard, the research is an example of quasi-experimental design in the experimental design sorts within multi-subject research designs. Experimental researches were done to test the effect of the dependent variable on the subject with the changes and differences created. The purpose of experimental designs was to determine the causality between variables (Büyükoztürk et al., 2012). In experimental research, the causal link between the variables was investigated and the variables were held in check to observe the effects and changes. Experimental research not only allowed the relationship between the variables to be explained and interpreted, but also surfaced the different outcomes upon factoring in different variables (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1990; Karakaya, 2009). In this investigation, in accordance with the experimental research criteria, a control group and an experimental group were formed. In the experiment group, lessons based on writing skills were managed

for 6 h a week across 8 weeks and at the end of each lesson, 20 min of the proposed activity was performed. The procedure for the activity is as follows: It started with students writing random sentences to a piece of paper, folding the paper like a snowball and throwing it to a random student in the class. The sentences within the papers were general questions. Every student picked the paper they got and answered the question, then proceeded to write another question to throw the paper to another student. This generated a non-specific and non-individualistic generalized conversational atmosphere in the classroom. Students used cognitive, sensual and psychomotor skills to participate in the activity. At the end of the lesson, the teacher gathered the papers and listed the errors and mistakes in the conversations written on the papers. In the next lesson, the teachers required students to correct the mistakes which were then written on the board. This style helped the students to be actively involved in the improvement of their own writing skills. After the course of 8 weeks, the experiment group was given an open ended questionnaire about "ask, write, throw" technique to gather data, which got categorized afterwards.

Group description

This research was conducted with B2 level students of Gazi University Turkish Research and Education Center, with a total of 35 learners of 2015-2016 academic year. Learners had similar level of Turkish. The learners were divided into two groups based on their score from the placement test executed by the center. The exam consisted of 2 written and 2 oral levels testing speaking, writing and reading. After the written exam, the learners were interviewed and put into two different groups of similar Turkish level. The exam was executed and rated by three scholars specialized in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Skills of the learners were rated in accordance with CEFR ruling on B2 level. The fact that two groups had the same writing skills instructor was a key point as well. The control group consisted of 17 and the experimental group consisted of 18 learners, of which 18 were females and 17 were male learners.

Collection of data

The writing skills of the students were evaluated upon the passages and essays they wrote. To this end, a writing skills progressive scoring key was prepared. Initially, the key consisted of 10 different criteria such as "headline, style, vocabulary, exemplification". About this initial draft, 2 different accomplished scholars in the line of field and a measurement and evaluation specialist who were going to be the evaluators were consulted. After the final thoughts, the key was redesigned into 5 categories; adequacy of the word count, form of constructed sentences, punctuation, relevancy in writing and error count. Essays were evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5 points in these categories. It was decided between the three evaluators not to write down specific notes below the scores (Table 1).

In the beginning of the research, essays from both experimental group and the control group were evaluated by the criteria on this key by the predetermined evaluators. In addition to this, vocabulary mistake count was also depicted. Also the specialists counted the vocabulary errors in the texts, which are in accordance with the Turkish Language Institution Spelling Guide (2015).After the eight week process, same procedure was repeated.

Before the application and afterwards, to determine the consistency of the evaluators' judgments, the scores given by the evaluators were calculated with the Pearson correlation coefficient. (Table 2) TDK Yazım Kılavuzu (2015) The evaluators' relative scoring on each predetermined criteria were positively correlated. In other words, the specialists scored the

Table 1. The scoring key for evaluating learners' writing skills.

| Criteria | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|-------------------------------|---|---|-------|---|---|
| Adequacy of the word count | | | | | |
| Form of constructed sentences | | | | | |
| Punctuation | | | | | |
| Relevancy in writing | | | | | |
| Error count | | | | | |

Table 2. Correlation coefficients calculated from the evaluators' scores.

| Criteria | Specialist 1-Specialist 2 | Specialist 1-Specialist 3 | Specialist 2-Specialist 3 |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| Adequacy of the word count | 0.823 | 0.836 | 0.883 |
| Form of constructed sentences | 0.857 | 0.804 | 0.858 |
| Punctuation | 0.835 | 0.889 | 0.886 |
| Relevancy in writing | 0.872 | 0.907 | 0.948 |
| Error count | 0.829 | 0.848 | 0.879 |

writing skills of the learners similarly. Furthermore, to determine the consistency of the individual scores given by individual specialists, Cronbach's alpha was calculated as a coefficient. For the first evaluator Cronbach's alpha coefficient was 0.897, for the second specialist 0.916 and the third specialist 0,908. This concludes that scores given by individual specialists were reliable, excluding the vocabulary error count score, and that the criteria created for the purpose of evaluating writing skills were valid and credible.

At the end, learners were given an open ended questionnaire without a time limit (40 min) and they were asked four different questions about the research. Afterwards the answers were collected and categorized by two different scholars specialized in the area. Among these categories the Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated and for the first question (In what aspect "Ask, write, throw" benefited you the most?) it was found to be 0.812 ($p < 0.05$). The coefficient for the second question (What did it contribute to your writing and how much?) was calculated to be 0,890 ($p < 0.05$). The coefficient for the third question (What do you think of "ask, write, throw" method?) was calculated to be 0,918 ($p < 0.05$). The Cohen's Kappa coefficient for the fourth question (Was "ask, write, throw" helpful for you?) was calculated to be 0.836 ($p < 0.05$).

Analysis of the data

The fact that the subject of the research was on learners of the Turkish language as a foreign language negatively affected the number of the participants, which led to the data being unstable and of abnormal distribution. To examine the gathered data, nonparametric statistical techniques were utilized.

In relation to the high correlation between the scores given by the three specialists, each student was given the average score they received from the evaluators. These figures were first used to designate the descriptive statistical analysis of the data, then the evaluation scores from both the control group and the experiment group, before and after the application of the technique, were compared and calculated within Mann Whitney U test. In order for the improvement within the groups to be tracked, Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied. In these comparisons ($p < 0.05$) significance level was exercised. The results were put into a chart to be examined and interpreted.

FINDINGS

Did the writing skills of the control group and the experimental group differ before the procedure?

Before the application process, writing skills of the students in both groups were evaluated by the specialists and shown in Table 3. Afterwards the relative writing skills of the separate groups were evaluated to show the independent difference between the groups with Mann Whitney U test.

It can be observed from Table 4 that before the application of the technique, the relevant writing skills of both groups were at similar levels ($p > 0.05$).

Did the writing skills of the control group and the experimental group differ in a meaningful way after the application of the technique?

In this process, learners in the experimental group were involved in the "ask, write, throw" activity for six hours a week, over the course of eight weeks. For the control group, lessons were performed in conventional ways in the same time period. After the application of the technique over the course of eight weeks, the difference between the two groups regarding the writing skills and the results of the Mann Whitney U test for that purpose are shown in Tables 5 and 6.

It can be deduced from Table 6 that a meaningful distinction between the writing skills of the control group and the experimental group has occurred over the chosen criteria after the application of the technique ($p < 0.05$). If the rank figures are inspected, it can be deduced that in all categories of evaluation, the

Table 3. Writing skills evaluated by the specialists of the control and experimental group before the application.

| Group | Criteria | N | Minimum | Maximum | \bar{X} | SD |
|--------------|-------------------------------|----|---------|---------|-----------|------|
| Experimental | Adequacy of the word count | 18 | 1.33 | 3.67 | 2.35 | 0.61 |
| | Form of constructed sentences | 18 | 1.33 | 4.00 | 2.63 | 0.70 |
| | Punctuation | 18 | 1.33 | 3.67 | 2.57 | 0.66 |
| | Relevancy in writing | 18 | 1.00 | 4.00 | 2.56 | 0.77 |
| | Error count | 18 | 5.00 | 13.00 | 8.72 | 2.35 |
| Control | Adequacy of the word count | 17 | 1.33 | 3.67 | 2.47 | 0.63 |
| | Form of constructed sentences | 17 | 1.67 | 4.00 | 2.92 | 0.73 |
| | Punctuation | 17 | 1.00 | 3.67 | 2.77 | 0.79 |
| | Relevancy in writing | 17 | 1.67 | 4.00 | 3.04 | 0.75 |
| | Error count | 17 | 5.00 | 12.00 | 8.94 | 2.14 |

Table 4. Mann Whitney U test results on the writing skills of both groups before the application.

| Criteria | Groups | N | Rank \bar{X} | Rank total | U | z | p |
|-------------------------------|--------------|----|----------------|------------|---------|-------|-------|
| Adequacy of the word count | Experimental | 18 | 16.86 | 303.50 | 132.500 | 0.692 | 0.503 |
| | Control | 17 | 19.21 | 326.50 | | | |
| Form of constructed sentences | Experimental | 18 | 16.14 | 290.50 | 119.500 | 1.118 | 0.273 |
| | Control | 17 | 19.97 | 339.50 | | | |
| Punctuation | Experimental | 18 | 16.42 | 295.50 | 124.500 | 0.955 | 0.351 |
| | Control | 17 | 19.68 | 334.50 | | | |
| Relevancy in writing | Experimental | 18 | 14.94 | 269.00 | 98.000 | 1.832 | 0.072 |
| | Control | 17 | 21.24 | 361.00 | | | |
| Error count | Experimental | 18 | 17.58 | 316.50 | 145.500 | 0.251 | 0.807 |
| | Control | 17 | 18.44 | 313.50 | | | |

Table 5. Statistics as to the writing skills of the both control and the experimental group after the application of the technique.

| Group | Criteria | N | Minimum | Maximum | \bar{X} | SD |
|--------------|-------------------------------|----|---------|---------|-----------|------|
| Experimental | Adequacy of the word count | 18 | 3.00 | 4.67 | 3.83 | 0.56 |
| | Form of constructed sentences | 18 | 3.33 | 5.00 | 4.24 | 0.55 |
| | Punctuation | 18 | 3.33 | 5.00 | 4.21 | 0.49 |
| | Relevancy in writing | 18 | 3.00 | 5.00 | 4.26 | 0.58 |
| | Error count | 18 | 1.00 | 9.00 | 5.39 | 2.30 |
| Control | Adequacy of the word count | 17 | 2.00 | 4.00 | 3.18 | 0.61 |
| | Form of constructed sentences | 17 | 2.33 | 5.00 | 3.63 | 0.81 |
| | Punctuation | 17 | 2.00 | 4.67 | 3.47 | 0.82 |
| | Relevancy in writing | 17 | 1.67 | 5.00 | 3.51 | 0.91 |
| | Error count | 17 | 4.00 | 12.00 | 7.88 | 2.09 |

experimental group scored higher than the control group; also the error count went down.

Table 6. Mann Whitney U test results of the writing skills of both the control and the experimental group after the application of the technique.

| Criteria | Groups | N | Rank \bar{X} | Rank total | U | z | p |
|-------------------------------|--------------|----|----------------|------------|--------|-------|-------|
| Adequacy of the word count | Experimental | 18 | 22.58 | 406.50 | 70.500 | 2.762 | 0.005 |
| | Control | 17 | 13.15 | 223.50 | | | |
| Form of constructed sentences | Experimental | 18 | 22.03 | 396.50 | 80.500 | 2.414 | 0.015 |
| | Control | 17 | 13.74 | 233.50 | | | |
| Punctuation | Experimental | 18 | 22.61 | 407.00 | 70.000 | 2.788 | 0.005 |
| | Control | 17 | 13.12 | 223.00 | | | |
| Relevancy in writing | Experimental | 18 | 22.31 | 401.50 | 75.500 | 2.581 | 0.009 |
| | Control | 17 | 13.44 | 228.50 | | | |
| Error count | Experimental | 18 | 13.17 | 237.00 | 66.000 | 2.903 | 0.003 |
| | Control | 17 | 23.12 | 393.00 | | | |

Table 7. Wilcoxon signed-rank test results on writing skills of the experimental group before and after the application of the technique.

| Criteria | Time of application | Rank | N | Rank average | Rank total | χ^2 | p |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------|----|--------------|------------|----------|-------|
| Adequacy of the word count | Final test-Preliminary test | Negative rank | 0 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 3.740 | 0.000 |
| | | Positive rank | 18 | 9.50 | 171.00 | | |
| | | Equal | 0 | | | | |
| Form of constructed sentences | Final test-Preliminary test | Negative rank | 0 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 3.731 | 0.000 |
| | | Positive rank | 18 | 9.50 | 171.00 | | |
| | | Equal | 0 | | | | |
| Punctuation | Final test-Preliminary test | Negative rank | 0 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 3.728 | .000 |
| | | Positive rank | 18 | 9.50 | 171.00 | | |
| | | Equal | 0 | | | | |
| Relevancy in writing | Final test-Preliminary test | Negative rank | 1 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 3.686 | 0.000 |
| | | Positive rank | 17 | 10.00 | 170.00 | | |
| | | Equal | 0 | | | | |
| Error count | Final test-Preliminary test | Negative rank | 18 | 9.50 | 171.00 | 3.741 | 0.000 |
| | | Positive rank | 0 | 0.00 | 0.00 | | |
| | | Equal | 0 | | | | |

Did the writing skills of the experimental group only differ in a meaningful way after the application of the technique?

Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied to see if the writing skills of the learners in the experimental group differed in a meaningful way before and after the eight week period of applying the method. The results can be seen in Table 7.

Judging from the information unveiled in Table 7, it can

be said that a meaningful improvement is observed on the writing skills of the experimental group after the application of the technique ($p < 0.05$). Across all the criteria, average rank and total points show that the average writing skills of the experimental group before the experiment were elevated to higher levels after the technique was applied and performed. Moreover, the average error count of 8.72 before the experiment dropped down as low as 5.39 afterwards, which allows the interpretation that “ask, write, throw” technique helped

Table 8. Wilcoxon signed-rank test results of the writing skills of the control group before and after the procedure.

| Criteria | Time of application | Rank | N | Average rank | Total rank | X ² | p | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|------------|----------------|-------|-------|
| Adequacy of the word count | Final test | test-Preliminary | Negative rank | 1 | 6.00 | 6.00 | 3.238 | 0.001 |
| | | | Positive rank | 15 | 8.67 | 130.00 | | |
| | | | Equal | 1 | | | | |
| Form of constructed sentences | Final test | test-Preliminary | Negative rank | 0 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 3.309 | 0.001 |
| | | | Positive rank | 14 | 7.50 | 105.00 | | |
| | | | Equal | 3 | | | | |
| Punctuation | Final test | test-Preliminary | Negative rank | 2 | 3.00 | 6.00 | 2.771 | 0.006 |
| | | | Positive rank | 11 | 7.73 | 85.00 | | |
| | | | Equal | 4 | | | | |
| Relevancy in writing | Final test | test-Preliminary | Negative rank | 3 | 10.17 | 30.50 | 2.188 | 0.029 |
| | | | Positive rank | 14 | 8.75 | 122.50 | | |
| | | | Equal | 0 | | | | |
| Error count | Final test | test-Preliminary | Negative rank | 11 | 6.73 | 74.00 | 2.811 | 0.005 |
| | | | Positive rank | 1 | 4.00 | 4.00 | | |
| | | | Equal | 5 | | | | |

Table 9. Opinions gathered from the students for question 1.

| Categories | N | Sample answers |
|---------------|----|---|
| Socialization | 11 | "We're corresponding with each other. It's like texting but better." |
| | | "I had a correspondence with all my classmates. I got to know more about my friends." |
| | | "I got to meet my friends. Normally I am shy when it comes to talk but I can write and ask whatever I want in class." |
| Psychological | 5 | "I had correspondence with everyone I don't talk in recess time." |
| | | "I feel more free and relaxed when writing." |
| | | "I don't get nervous when I'm writing." |
| Daily life | 2 | "We're using daily language." |
| | | "It is like a real life simulation." |

learners' writing skills improve in a meaningful way.

Do the writing skills of the control group show a quantifiable change before and after the experiment?

In order to determine if the writing skills of the control group, who were taught in the conventional ways during the experiment, changed or not, Wilcoxon signed-rank test was applied and the results can be examined in Table 8.

Upon inspecting Table 9, it can be observed that writing skills of the learners in the control group has a meaningful difference before and after the experimental

process and the course of eight weeks ($p < 0,05$). Average rank and total points state that across all criteria, the average writing skills of the control group have been elevated to higher levels. Also, the error count shows a decreasing value.

Findings and results from the open ended questionnaires distributed to learners about their opinions of the experience

The forms were distributed to the students of the experimental group after the 8 weeks of application process. It contains these four questions:

Table 10. Answers for the second question.

| Categories | N | Sample answers |
|------------------|----|--|
| Vocabulary boost | 10 | “Everybody uses different words. We’re learning by looking them up.” “I learn new vocabulary when my friends use them.” |
| Social | 8 | “Questions like ‘Shall we go drink coffee together?’ come up and we go for a coffee as a class.” “Very funny dialogues occur, we laugh in class” “Weeks later after the activity, I can write more comfortably.” |
| Psychological | 4 | “I don’t get bored when I’m writing.” “I don’t see writing as a lecture.” |

1. In what aspect “Ask, write, throw” benefited you the most?
2. What did it contribute to your writing and how much?
3. What do you think of “ask, write, throw” method?
4. Was “ask, write, throw” helpful for you?

Findings for question 1

After the eight week application process, learners were asked the question to determine which area the method affected them the most. The answers and the findings can be observed in Table 9.

It can be seen from Table 9 that social aspect of “ask, write, throw” affected the learners of Turkish as a foreign language the most. Students stated thanks to this activity (n=11) they socialized and felt comfortable saying what they wanted to say. Thanks to the activity, learners experienced a boost not only academically but also socially. Learners (n=5) felt more relaxed through the process, contradicting with what normally is observed as a stressful experience to improve writing skills. They worked freely and in a relaxed way. The effectiveness of the activity can be seen from the statements of learners (n=2) that they are able to use what they have learned in daily life.

Findings for question 2

The answers gathered from the students to the question “What did it contribute to your writing and how much?” are given in Table 10.

Learners stated that this method benefits learning new vocabulary the most (n=10). Learners also stated that the technique contributed to their social life as well (n=8). Another aspect of contribution from the activity was in psychological point of view (n=4).

Findings and answers for question 3

Answers and data gathered from the third question on the questionnaire can be found in Table 11.

Among the answers to this question, learners expressed educational aspect more prominently (n=9), and learners stated that they learned new words and new grammatical structures during the writing process. It is of significant importance that learners find the “ask, write, throw” technique to be fun (n=5), creative (n=3) and enjoyable (n=3).

Answers and data gathered for the 4th question

Answers for the question “Was “ask, write, throw” helpful for you?” are categorized in Table 12.

DISCUSSION

This research investigated the effectiveness of AWT technique on writing skills of B2 level learners of Turkish as a foreign language. It has been found that writing skills of the control and experimental group showed no significant or meaningful difference before the research. This meant that the two groups were at the same level in terms of adequacy of the word count, form of constructed sentences, punctuation, relevancy in writing and the vocabulary spelling errors in the beginning. However, after the eight week process, a difference in writing skill levels was detected between the subject and control group. Relative to the control group, experimental group showed more improvement in writing skills over the course of eight weeks. The improvement of the control group indicates the success of traditional methods also, yet the surpassing achievement in writing skills of the experimental group shows the superior success of AWT. Across all criteria, experimental group showed significant improvement relative to the control group. The vocabulary spelling errors of the experimental group being low is another important finding, as the feedback the learners get from what they have written wrong on the papers and corrections they made to their own mistakes helped them learn both actively and in a more permanent way, improving their vocabulary along with their writing skills.

There is no known method to improve learners’ writing

Table 11. Categories collected from answers given to third question.

| Categories | N | Sample answers |
|-----------------------------|---|--|
| Educational and instructive | 9 | “We learn new words and new rules.” “I learned a lot of new rules and vocabulary from my friends.” “I can learn about my classmates’ lives without asking them directly.” |
| Funny | 5 | “Sometimes really funny things are written. We share a laugh.” “We laughed so much as a class about a paper last week.” |
| Creative | 3 | “I read sentences that would never cross my mind.” “Sometimes we write really advanced dialogues, and I wonder how we write them.” “I corresponded with every one of my classmates. I know my friends better now.” |
| Enjoyable | 3 | “Classes are really enjoyable.” “Writing used to be boring, not it’s amusing.” |

Table 12. Table of answers regarding the fourth question

| Categories | N | Sample answers |
|------------|----|--|
| Yes | 18 | “Yes, because my foreign language has improved a lot.” “Yes; I no longer feel nervous when I’m talking to or writing to a friend.” “Yes, I can exchange jokes with my friends in Turkish” “When I come across a sentence that I do not understand, I ask my friend and sometimes another friend tells me the answer. We became a socialized class.” “I loved, had fun with, played with, learned Turkish.” |
| No | 0 | |

All participants in the eight week process of the study found the AWT technique useful and helpful for them (n=18).

skills when teaching Turkish as a foreign language, and no similar techniques to “ask, write, throw”. This prevented the comparison to a similar or different method being used in the field, but the success of an original devised method means an important addition to the field. Judging by the answers to the open ended questionnaire, along with the academic skills of the learners, their social skills have also improved with AWT. The burden and the anxiety of writing and improving writing skills in traditional ways have ceased to exist within the activity, and learners were able to express themselves in a more relaxed and free way which contributed to their daily life. Because of the friendly atmosphere created by the method, learners were naturally motivated to learn the new words they hear from their friends. It can even be said that the traditional ways of teaching vocabulary may fall inferior to the natural, social interaction environment created by the activity. Learning and teaching new vocabulary are a crucial aspect of foreign language education. Generally, a specific planned time is set for vocabulary practice and there are various techniques and methods that can be used to create the learning environment, but with AWT, which was originally designed to improve writing skills, the natural interaction among

the language users accumulated the motivation and the environment to learn new words. Learners were motivated to learn the new words their friends use and these applied usages of the words support the idea of language should be utilized, otherwise would be forgotten. It was clear that the learners used the language effectively, socialized within their group, improved their writing skills and learned new words in the process. These findings suggest that the technique should be considered a necessity for teaching Turkish as a foreign language. Also the vocabulary is learned in a naturally motivated environment, thus accumulating new vocabulary that is more permanent and useful in day to day interactions. AWT creates a feedback loop among the learners, about which Schunk (1985, 2001) says: “learner to learner feedback is more efficient than instructor to learner feedback.” Schunk points out peer idolizing as an important aspect of learning. In AWT, learners point out the new words they see from their peers and how they are motivated to learn them, thus improving upon their vocabulary, as well as writing skills. Learners point out that they learned new grammatical rules and vocabulary, and socialized with their friends and got to know each other better, indicating the cognitive and sensual aspects

of the technique. Rauch and Whittaker (1999), Ballantyne et al. (2002) and Gemmel (2003)'s studies show that as well as the learner to learner feedback loop, observing each other improves the learning process. From these points, AWT technique having both the feedback loop and the observation in a package is important.

Learners stated being free and relaxed when writing. This is caused by not having to interact with the instructor all the time and interacting with their peers and friends instead during the activity. Wynn and Kromrey (1999) suggest that learners are more relaxed when interacting with their peers and it builds cooperation in the class. The technique allows students to have the choice of writing whatever they want on the piece of paper and throwing it to their friends, creating a free, relaxed interaction environment, and helping them socialize.

Learners stated that the AWT technique contributed to their social life as well. They could ask the questions they would otherwise be too shy to ask with the technique, and the randomization of the patterns within the classroom allowed differences outside the classroom activities to emerge. Another aspect of the technique is the lowering of the affective filter, stated within the Natural Way. The anxiety of writing misspelled words or wrong clauses is reduced when writing to their peers, allowing learners to express themselves more freely and be more concentrated when correcting their own mistakes as a group.

Participants also stated that the technique is educational. They indicated that the AWT is both fun and creative. It is important to consider that the learners are having fun while learning. As Buzan (2006) says, 'the learning which takes place in a free and happy environment is always more permanent'. This finding is vital to understanding the technique's success.

All the participants who filled out the open ended questionnaire thought that the technique was useful and beneficial to them. They were more relaxed, sociable and found it easier to interact with their friends. A dynamic learning process was created within the classroom and learners improved both cognitively and sensually. They had a better social standing as individuals who could express themselves and even made jokes in the target language. These points indicate the importance of "ask, write, throw" technique in teaching foreign languages.

Suggestions for teachers

Making the "ask, write, throw" technique a useful one requires the teachers to assume a facilitating role. In this process, the teacher should support everyone in the classroom to correspond with each other, but must be cautious not to interfere too much. It is important to create a lively, relaxed classroom environment with the method where learners are not afraid to make mistakes. This method requires a classroom setting and sitting arrangement that is able to let students see each other

and throw their snowballs to one another. Teachers should collect the papers learners write at the end of every lesson and write the mistakes on the board for them to rectify their own mistakes. Teachers can intervene if the students cannot find the mistakes, helping them not directly but with guided discovery. Teacher should always keep in mind that the language is for communication.

Suggestions for further research

This research constitutes learning a foreign language in general terms, specifically it is based upon teaching writing skills in Turkish as a foreign language. In conclusion, it is blatantly obvious that "ask, write, throw" technique helps learners improve both cognitively and sensually. This method is thought to be useful for teaching different languages as well. It is considered as a step forward for teaching and learning new languages for this method to be improved upon and used for teaching different languages, when teaching a foreign language. Also it is recommended to increase the usage of the technique in teaching Turkish as a foreign language.

Conflict of Interests

The authors have not declared any conflict of interests.

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