Teaching writing in emergency distance education: The case of primary school teachers

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Abstract

This is a case study examining the writing teaching processes of primary school teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fifty-four primary school teachers who conduct their writing teaching practices by distance education took part in the study. The data were gathered through a semi-structured interview form developed by the researcher under the guidance of an expert. The interviews were conducted via video chat programs. After having the participant's consent, the interviews were recorded. In the analysis of the transcribed texts, descriptive and content analysis methods were used. The results were divided into five groups after the data analysis, and these are: first writing experiences, situations originating from the teacher, situations originating from the student, situations originating from the student's parents, and recommendations. The results revealed that sufficient significance was not given to the writing tasks during the pandemic, and these efforts were postponed to the next semester when it was expected that face-to-face education would begin. In the process, the study revealed that student motivation was poor, there were issues in the management of the classroom environment, and writings of students could not be provided with the necessary feedback and corrections. Besides, what stands out that for teaching writing, parent support is required, and parents do not pay desired attention to the writing. However, primary school teachers have provided some suggestions for more effective writing teaching.

Keywords: Teaching writing; emergency distance education; primary school teachers; pandemic; distance education

1. Introduction

Last year, both Turkey and the entire world witnessed extraordinary conditions due to the quickly spreading coronavirus pandemic starting in Wuhan City of China and (Zhou et al., 2020). This disease, declared by the Health Organization (WHO) as a pandemic on 11 March 2020 (WHO, 2020), has led to many changes in human life. Many steps have been taken to deter the dissemination of the COVID-19 virus in both social and educational environments. Suspending face-to-face education and initiating distance education is one of these measures. With the closure of educational institutions at every

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level, nearly the whole world shifted to online emergency distance education (Bozkurt & Sharma, 2020). This situation can affect primary school students more in terms of their level of development. It is a matter of curiosity how writing education, which even in face-to-face education environments does not meet the expected degree of success, is attempted to be accomplished by distance education.

In order to express feelings and thoughts with symbols (Sexton, Harris, & Graham, 1998), writing can be described as a complex process that involves certain cognitive, sensory, and psychomotor acquisitions (Graham & Harris, 2005). On the other hand, writing education is a process involving formal or non-formal education, beginning from preschool, which would last a lifespan and is conducted to improve the written communication skills of individuals (Göçer, 2016). Writing education begins with preschool in Turkey, but the real learning process takes place in primary school. Therefore, the quality of writing education offered to students in primary school is deemed important. The circumstances of our time have made the ability to read and write an important part of many personal and social activities. Writing skills and written documents influence numerous things such as government relations, legal mechanisms, sports, data, etc. This condition has made fundamental writing skills one of the critical competencies of modern life nowadays (Sarikaya & Yılar, 2019).

However, there are some difficulties in writing skill's nature. Because writing involves multiple cognitive, sensory, and psychomotor acts to be used simultaneously. This situation creates writing problems for individuals regardless of their level of development (Troia, Shankland & Wolbers, 2012). Researchers noted that writing is both harder and more complicated relative to other language skills, as a matter of fact (Allal, 2018; Evans, 2001). Harris, Graham, Mason, and Saddler (2002) have pointed out that writing skills are more difficult and complicated than other basic language skills. The authors claimed that this was due to the complexity of managing the cognitive, sensory, and mechanical components during the writing process. Troia, Shankland, and Wolbers (2012) report that this particular situation, which is related to the writing structure, leads students to face multiple difficulties in the acquisition of writing abilities. Özkara (2007) and Akyol and Çetinkaya-Özdemir (2018) claim that mechanical problems such as layout or problems with an expression such as organization could be such challenges faced by students. The performance of students in other language skills (Göçer, 2017) and their writing sensory characteristics can also be effective in perceiving writing as a challenging task (Sarikaya & Sökmen, 2019).

Although writing is a difficult learning field to acquire, it is critical for individuals and societies. By possibilities such as sharing ideas, calming after the emotional transfer, cognitive and sensory stimulation, as well as opportunities such as interpersonal cooperation and partnerships, and cultural exchange, writing is socially relevant (Cutler, & Graham, 2008; Dennis, & Swinth, 2001; Güneş, 2016; Müldür, 2017). It is also possible

to find research throughout literature that emphasizes that writing influences individuals' academic lives (Lam, Au, Leung, & Li-Tsang, 2011). Researchers say that students with writing problems will not be competitive in written-based tests, which will impact the individual's academic progress, and that these students will not benefit from writing activities for learning purposes as well (Chalk, Hagan-Burke, & Burke, 2005). For this reason, almost every country has a separate unit or chapter on teaching writing in their curriculum. Although several societies pay close attention to writing teaching, it is notable that they do not attain the desired success in writing (Bromley, 2007).

According to many studies carried out in different stages of formal education in Turkey, we can say that students have low success in writing (Akyol & Cetinkaya-Özdemir, 2018; Arıcı & Ungan, 2008; Sarikaya & Yılar, 2019; Tağa & Ünlü, 2013). Researchers report that a similar situation exists in Europe and America (Fisher, 2012; Lam, Au, Leung & Li-Tsang, 2011). The aforementioned studies note that after the education they get, primary school students cannot go beyond reading skills and that many students cannot meet the writing approach to achieve their personal and academic success after secondary school. Country curriculum, technological developments, student sensory characteristics toward writing, teachers' writing techniques and methods, and the significance that parents attribute to writing, are considered to be effective in bringing about such a circumstance (Ataman, 2009; Graham, Harris, Mason, et al., 2008; Susar-Kırmızı & Akkaya, 2009; Ülper, 2012). The literature reveals that the writing success that is aimed at is not achieved even in the face-to-face educational environment. For this reason, attention should be paid to the educational practices on writing adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.1. Covid-19 and Distance Education Practices in Turkey

Following the detection of the first cases in Turkey, certain steps have been taken and introduced by the Republic of Turkey-Ministry of National Education. In the first phase, the semester break has been extended from March 16, 2020, to April 30, 2020. Meanwhile, the Ministry decided that education should be carried out over Education Informatics Network (EBA) and broadcasting of three television channels in cooperation with Turkey Radio and Television Corporation (TRT) for educational purposes was confirmed (Republic of Turkey-Ministry of National Education, 2020). Three different channels have started broadcasting for primary and secondary school students: TRT EBA Primary School, TRT EBA Secondary School, and TRT EBA High School. On April 29, 2020, it was reported that schools will remain closed until 31 May 2020, due to the course of the pandemic. The pandemic has led to similar measures to be taken in other countries. Countries such as Spain, China, the United States of America, France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Ireland have suspended face-to-face education practices and switched to distance education (Can, 2020; Fiş-Erümit, 2020; Gilani, 2020). Within the

specified time, students followed their lectures on television broadcasts or EBA. In this process, students were directed to carry out writing exercises in textbooks and workbooks.

Due to the decrease in the number of Covid-19 cases, new normalization steps have been taken afterward. Accordingly, primary schools were opened gradually. The students continued face-to-face education two days a week. However, the rising number of cases has made it inevitable for the Ministry of National Education to take new measures. In this sense, schools have been shut down and a decision has been taken in favor of distance education. Meanwhile, via video conference programs, teachers began teaching online courses through EBA. Lessons are limited to 30 minutes. Television channels and EBA contents are used together with online courses (Yurtbakan & Akyıldız, 2020). Nevertheless, studies indicate that certain students do not have access to distance learning and that there are shortcomings in terms of internet connectivity and technological devices. Saran (2020) notes that there is a problem with effective usage, leading to inequality. The quality of learning in distance learning programs undoubtedly relies on resources for digital access and efficient utilization (Gilani, 2020).

In the literature, you can find some research on education during the pandemic period. Some research report that during the pandemic process, distance education approaches have beneficial aspects, such as encouraging individualized teaching, leading to the improvement of self-regulation skills, and increasing enthusiasm for student learning (Huber & Helm, 2020; Sarı & Nayır, 2020). Most research, however, stresses that the process causes learning failures, induces opportunity inequality, and adversely impacts students' sensory characteristics (Hughes, 2020; Saavedra, 2020; Saran, 2020; Sirem & Baş, 2020). While several studies examine classroom management activities and the perspectives of teachers and school administrators on these methods (Külekçi-Akyavuz & Çakın, 2020; Sönmez, Yıldırım & Çetinkaya, 2020; Viner et al., 2020; Yang, 2020), some of them are intended to identify problems in online classes (Özer, 2020; Sarı & Nayır, 2020). When looking at the studies in the research fields similar to the current study, they have included the opinions of Turkish teachers on teaching practices during the pandemic period (Bayburtlu, 2020), the views of candidates of primary school teachers on activities that are carried out during the pandemic period (Duban & Sen, 2020; Sönmez, Yıldırım & Çetinkaya, 2020) and the experiences of primary school students experiencing dyslexia during the pandemic period (Sirem & Baş, 2020).

As mentioned above, the literature supports the opinion that writing is a field which is overlooked and difficult to acquire. However, related research has demonstrated that the desired level of success has never been accomplished in written expression skills. Research on the distance education practices which were carried out during the pandemic period mostly dwells on general problems, and there is no specific research that takes into account writing practices and teaching. The majority of these studies

draw attention to the negative aspects of distance education. However, one can clearly state that the targeted achievement level cannot be realized in the teaching of writing even in face-to-face education settings. For this cause, how written teaching practices are conducted and their usefulness in the distance learning process appears as a question that needs to be reviewed. The purpose of this study is to analyze the writing of teaching practices conducted by primary school teachers during the pandemic process following the views of the primary school teachers. The study addresses both distance education and limited face-to-face education practices. Determining the challenges faced by primary school teachers in the process is thought to be important both for possible related problems that may occur in the future and for the teaching of writing in distance education.

2. Method

2.1. Research Model

This research was conducted in line with the case study method. A case study is a thorough examination of an event whose limits in the situations are precisely defined, encountered, and worth investigating in depth (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2010). This research which is intended as a case study aims to examine the writing teaching activities that primary school teachers try to perform through distance education during the pandemic process within the current conditions.

2.2. Participants

Data were collected from 54 primary school teachers. When a sufficient sample size has been created, the data showed the characteristics of saturation. Therefore, the study was limited to 54 participants. Participants were determined by applying the criterion sampling method. Participants were purposefully selected by criterion sampling. The research involved participants who actively fulfilled the requirements for providing online education. Of the participants, 32 of them are women and 22 of them are men. 18 of the participants (33.4%) have experience of 1-5 years; 8 of them (14.8%) have 5-10 years; 20 of them (37%) have 11-15 years; 8 (14.8%) of them have 15 years or more professional experience. Also, 16 of the participants (29.6%) are first-grade; 11 (20.4%) of them are second-grade; 13 (24.1%) of them are third-grade teachers and 14 (25.9%) of them are fourth-grade teachers. Participants work in a district or at the city center. All of the participants are permanent staff working in public schools. Participants currently teach through distance education. We used pseudonyms for participants using the Ai matrix. For example, T24 pseudonymous specifies the primary school teacher number 24. The numbers of T1 to T16 refers to first-grade teachers; from T17 to T27 refers to second-grade teachers; the numbers T28-T40 refer to third-grade teachers and lastly, between T40 and T54 indicates fourth-grade teachers.

2.3. Data Collection Techniques and Instruments

The interview technique was utilized to obtain information about the writing teaching process of the participants. Interviewing is a cooperative and interaction-based method aimed at answering questions and obtaining answers, performed for a solid reason with relevant people at a specified location and time (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Seidman, 2006). Semi-structured interviews among the interview types were used in the study. For this purpose, a semi-structured interview form was created. The form consists of two parts. The first part is designed to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants. There are 15 questions provided in the second part in order to get particular knowledge about the participants' writing teaching processes.

While developing the semi-structured interview form, first of all, unstructured interviews were conducted with three primary school teachers. The points highlighted and the questions asked were determined by analyzing the interviews. A draft semi-structured interview form was prepared by comparing the literature and the initial interviews. In this form, there are 13 questions and their probe questions. The draft form was presented for the opinion of two lecturers who are experts in the field of education in the mother tongue for evaluation of their clarity. Necessary language corrections were applied to the five questions in line with the opinions of the faculty members. Later, the draft form was submitted to the opinion of three faculty members, while three of them are experts in literacy and Turkish education in Primary Education and one of them is an expert in the field of computer teaching technologies. After the experts were informed about the purpose and methodology of the study, they were asked to provide feedback stating whether it is suitable or not suitable for each question item. All of the questions were approved by at least ¾ majority of the participants. On the other hand, the experts stated that additional questions should be added to the draft form concerning four questions. The form was presented to the experts one more time after making the necessary changes and the draft form was finalized. The form was tested again for understandability and experts also confirmed that there was no issue in terms of language. Interviews started with a 13-item form, but in the subsequent interviews, two additional questions and relevant probe questions were added to the form. Thus, in the final version of the semi-structured interview form, 15 questions were included. Some interview questions are as follows: "What do you think about the effectiveness of writing education practices that you performed through distance learning during the pandemic? Why?", "What kind of problems did you encounter regarding teaching writing skills in the process? Have you been able to overcome these problems? And how? "," As a first-grade teacher, how do you evaluate the fact that children's first writing experiences were experienced through distance education? ", "Do you have concerns about your students' future writing experiences? Could you elaborate?".

2.4. Process

   Participants have taken part voluntarily. Data was started to be collected after obtaining the necessary permissions. First of all, correspondence was formed with school officials in order to reach out to the teachers. Then, volunteer teachers were contacted and interview appointments were planned. Owing to the pandemic precautions, most of the interviews were conducted through phone or video call applications. Interviews with some of the teachers were performed at the school, taking the appropriate precautions. The necessary permission was obtained from all teachers to record the interview. Interviews conducted by video call tools were recorded automatically, while face-to-face interviews were recorded at the school using a tape recorder. Interview durations vary between 12 to 32 minutes. Ethics committee approval was obtained for the study.

2.5. Data analysis

   The details collected from the interviews were transcribed by the researcher. To the transcribed texts, line numbers were added, and line numbers were placed in parentheses while direct quotes were given. Descriptive and content analysis methods were used together in data analysis. To provide direct quotes and determine frequency values, descriptive analysis was the applied method. Content analysis method preferred when analyzing the interview records. The stages specified by Dey (1993) were followed while analyzing the content. These stages in question are description, classification, and association. The participants' direct viewpoints were included in the description stage. During the classification phase, the data obtained from the interviews were coded and analyzed. The codes are classified under categories for the relationship-building stage based on the relationships they indicate and then contrasted with each other. After the coding process was carried out by the researcher, another faculty member who specialized in a related area also coded approximately 40 percent of the data set. In this way, the inter-coder reliability index is calculated as .85 with the help of the Cohen Kappa formula. Miles and Huberman (1994) reports that when the value which is calculated with the help of the Cohen Kappa formula is equal and above .80, it means the best fit. In the creation of codes and categories, the analysis unit was determined as the first step. Then the codes were determined by the researcher. Based on the relationships they show; the codes are clustered into categories. Henry and Moscovici (1968) indicated that it is appropriate to use literature guidance or the data gathered from the participants when deciding the codes and categories. Also, the authors report that both methods can be used together. In this study, when defining the codes and categories, both the literature guidance and the data set were used. For the determination of codes, the naming of categories, and the suitability of the distribution of codes to categories, expert assistance was sought. In this regard, three faculty members were interviewed, two of whom were experts in the field of primary education, reading, and writing education, while the other one was an expert in native language education. Experts evaluated the

above issues and expressed their opinion in the form stating whether an item is suitable or not suitable. The fit index calculated with the help of the Kohen Kappa formula was .91. This value indicates an acceptable fit. In naming certain codes and assigning codes into categories, experts have made some recommendations. In such cases, where agreement could not be established, the necessary modifications were made following the experts' consensus.

3. Results

The first category includes the first writing teaching experiences of first-grade primary school teachers concerning the pandemic process. Codes of the category are included in Table 1 below.

Table 1. First writing experiences

Sub-category	Codes	n
	Limited face-to-face education	
	Shortage of Time	16
	Low student motivation	10
	The need for parental support	16
	Parent and student's anxiety about being infected	6
First Writing Experiences	*Distance education*	
	Shortage of Time	16
	Managing class is difficult	15
	Low student motivation	12
	Insufficient supply of course equipment	5
	Inability to control student's writing	10
	Difficulty in giving feedback and making corrections	14
	Inadequate use of technology	6
	Failure to provide parent support	10
	Postponing	4
	Paying more attention to reading activities	4

Table 1 describes the views of teachers in primary school who instruct illiterate students (1st-grade students) about the challenges and issues they face in the process. As we know, at the beginning of the 2019-2020 academic year, the first graders and other grades received face-to-face education for a certain time. In compliance with the measures taken to deter the proliferation of the pandemic, however, all students have again switched to distance education. The primary school teachers encountered some problems during the face-to-face education time as well. The issues especially emphasized by teachers are the insufficient time allocated for writing education (n=16) and the need for parental support (n=16). As a matter of fact, students went to school - face-to-face education- for only two days of the week. However, in this limited time, it does not seem possible to instruct writing teaching practices, which are already not

feasible to accomplish during the normal education system. The statement of T2 is as follows: "*The time we dedicated to teaching first reading and writing was the current face-to-face teaching hours in the period before the pandemic. So time is not enough. I needed parental support, especially in writing education. Without the support of parents, we would not have made much progress in writing skills in this period.* [Line, 12-15]." This can be given as an example of this situation. As we can understand from the statement of T9 which is as follows "*The students just couldn't feel motivated. They engaged in reading activities more actively but had trouble focusing on writing studies. Of course, the time we allocated for writing was also a factor in this case.* [Line, 34-36].", some of the participants (n=10) stressed that it was difficult for the students to adapt to the school and their motivation for learning was not at the required level. That is being said, some participants (n=6) reported that because of the issues of being infected, students and parents have concerns about attending school. Participants emphasized that some students were therefore deprived of writing teaching activities.

In regards to their first writing teaching experiences in the distance education process, participants stressed the inadequate time (n=16) and the challenge of classroom management (n=15). Regarding this matter, examples can be seen in the statements of T13 as follows: "*Lesson time in distance education is 30 minutes. First-grade students can sometimes need 10 minutes to become ready for the lesson. I am trying to teach writing in the remaining time* [Line, 54-55]." and of T7' as follows: "*While trying to give feedback to a student, other students may be distracted, or everyone can say something at the same time. Sometimes, we can encounter situations such as the student is leaving the room, playing/arguing with the sibling, or playing with toys.* [Line, 32-36]." Some participants (n=12) stated, as can be comprehended from these phrases, that they could not create or maintain student motivation related to writing teaching in a distance education setting. Besides, the participants stated that the first-grade students become easily bored and tired during writing activities. A few participants (n=5) stated that students had difficulty getting ready their materials concerning the teaching of writing, such as notebooks, pencils, and erasers, particularly the pencil sharpening can take a long time. The difficulty of checking the student's written piece, correcting it, and giving feedback are some of the most important problems elucidated by the participants. When we look at the statement of T16: "*Observing the moment of writing is particularly important for us as it is their first writing experience. In distance education, it is not possible to observe the student at the moment of writing. How did the student write the letter? Did he or she start from the right place? Has he or she skipped any letters? These kinds of questions may remain unanswered.* [Line, 74-78]." and T1's view suggesting that "*You can ask the student to show their writing to the camera. However, it is very difficult to look from there and analyze the writing. Since they cannot hold it up stable, you cannot understand something or give feedback. That's why I think the biggest problem is not being able to provide the necessary feedback and guidance to student writings* [Line, 50-53]. ", these can

be given as an example of this situation. Some of the participants (n=6) stressed that the use of a mouse and keyboard by their students was unsatisfactory so that they could not advantage enough from alternative software or applications. At the same time, teachers indicated the need for intensive parental support in all of the issues outlined above. Some participants (n=6) even said that the pandemic and distance learning has put parents in a much more powerful and essential position in their teaching processes. Some of the first-grade teachers who participated in the research stated that they did not give the requisite significance to writing teaching practices and that they rescheduled the detailed writing instruction to a period when it was possible to have face-to-face education. The same participants indicated that for the first term they will improve reading skills and concentrate on writing tasks in the second term. These participants are also those who believe that in the second term, face-to-face education will resume. On this issue, the direct citation of T10 is as follows: "*This period, I could not provide enough significance to writing practices. If we switch to a face-to-face education setting in the second semester, it will be my priority. It is very difficult to check students' writing remotely. We could only trust the sayings of parents* [Line, 24-26]. " The issues highlighted by first-grade teachers regarding limited face-to-face education were also raised by participants who carry out writing teaching activities in the second-grade and higher grades at the primary school level. Consequently, the relevant codes were not included again but only the writing education activities performed through distance education were examined. Hence the findings were grouped under four categories which are situations originating from the teacher, situations originating from the student, situations originating from the student's parents, and recommendations. Table 2 shows the situations originating from the teacher regarding the teaching of writing in the distance education process.

Table 2. Situations originating from the teacher

Sub-category	Code	n
	Low quality of teaching	36
	Postponing	20
	Low motivation	32
Situations Originating from the Teacher	Lack of time and resources	24
	Focusing on reading and comprehension activities	16
	Instant response	30
	Checking student writing piece (managing time and output)	25
	Feedback and correction	34
	Use of instructional technologies	8
	The need for parental support	37

Almost all of the participants (n=36) stated that they could not effectively teach writing in the distance education setting. As a result, the participants (n=20) mentioned

that they were postponing the teaching of writing until when face-to-face education would become possible. As shown by Table 2, most of the participants (n=32) asserted that their motivation was low, and that this situation directly impacted the writing teaching process. We can understand the low teaching motivation when we look at the statement of T26 as following: "*Now I have to express that I'm bored. I cannot expect high motivation from my students even when I cannot be motivated. I suspended my goals for teaching writing until the time face-to-face education will begin.* [Line, 125-127]." As pointed out by the First Grade Teachers, the participants stated that the time they spent teaching writing in distance education was inadequate (n=24). T54 stated that "*In face-to-face education, we could assign some tasks and activities to students and do alternative writing practices. Now we can post some activities. But unfortunately, not everyone has the opportunity to print.* [Line, 58-59]." What is worth noting here is that primary school teachers have mentioned that their students may not have enough resources to do the writing practice they were expected. Some of the participants argued that they included more reading and comprehension exercises in Turkish lessons and anticipated that students would spontaneously develop writing skills after a while. The participants justify these beliefs with the positive impact of reading skills on writing skills. Participants stressed the lack of timely care and intervention as one of the drawbacks of distance learning practices in writing. The statement of T53 as follows: "*In teaching writing, we encounter certain situations in which you have to intervene to the student's action at that moment. In face-to-face education, we, as the teachers, could be able to instantly control the writings of the students by walking around the classroom. Now, that is not possible. The student writes but you don't know how he or she writes* [Line, 74-77]. " This can be given as an example of this situation. T30 emphasizes the lack of time by expressing the following thoughts: "*It is difficult to check what students write. It requires both time and certain means. It's not an inexpensive or convenient way to verify the text via the computer screen. You may ask the parent for the image of the student's writing. Then you have to print it out and edit it. What is more, then, you will take a photo of it again and send it to the parent.* [Line, 148-152]." It can be interpreted from this comment that it is difficult to monitor student writings, but neither it is simple nor cost-effective to provide feedback and corrections. Participants stated that technological tools can be used to give necessary feedback and necessary corrections to students' writings. The general view of the participants is that once the students complete the written assignments, the parents scan the written items of the students and send them to the teacher. After the teachers give the requisite feedback and clarifications to the related writings, they will send the text to the parents of the student, and the parents will review feedback and corrections with the student. However, this method is restricted by the technological usage abilities of both teachers and parents. Although some teachers have indicated that they perceive themselves to be incompetent in this role (n=8), some teachers have stated that they cannot receive support from parents for this particular method. The most

emphasized aspect by the teachers (n=37) is the need for parental support in teaching how to write. T41 states that "*We are in serious need of parents as mediators in this respect… Some of our parents are very responsive to this issue, but concerning written assignments, I could not receive the help I hoped from most of the other parents.* [Line, 100-103]." We can grasp the problem is that teachers could not get full support from the parents. Table 3 shows the codes related to the situations originating from the student related to the teaching of writing in the distance education process.

Table 3. Situations originating from the student

Sub-category	Code	n
Situations Originating from the Student	The importance attached to writing	8
	Concentration problems and getting bored quickly	35
	Motivation	25
	Sloppy writing style	10
	Need for support	22
	Sensory features regarding writing	17
	Dysgraphia	6
	Lack of resources	13

Table 3 reveals that certain primary school teachers (n=8) think that students do not pay enough importance to write. Another point emphasized by the participants about situations originating from the students is that they can get bored of writing activities easily and have concentration problems. T17 says that "*Also in face-to-face education, we know that students do not concentrate on the task of writing and can get bored very easily. But we were with the students over there and we could intervene in the process. Students are already bored at the screen. It's hard to grab their attention. At least when the teacher speaks they listen somehow. But during the writing activity, the teacher remains in a passive role.* [Line, 67-71]." This statement shows us that the teacher intervention is limited when teaching writing in the distance education environment and the student who is left alone has a problem of concentrating on the task and can get bored quickly. Accordingly, another issue emphasized by the participants is the motivation levels of the students. The participants stated that students who could not receive feedback and corrections during the writing activities could not feel motivated for the next writing practice (n=25). This situation leads students to easily get bored or cannot concentrate on writing assignments. As another effect of the inability of the instructor to provide feedback and correction, the participants stressed that the students tend to write poorly and randomly performed (n=10). Accordingly, T21 says that "*Students can neglect the writing task. However, they are kind of right because we cannot give them detailed feedback about their writing. After a while, students can quit paying attention and care when writing. Because there is no control or guidance* [Line, 100-102]." This statement

explains this situation very well. They highlighted that students with detrimental sensory characteristics towards writing were more troubled during this process, noting that students needed even more support during the distance education on teaching writing (n=22). Six respondents, who mentioned that they had students with dysgraphia, said that writing instruction worsened the situation within the framework of distance education methods. T24: "*I have a student who has writing difficulty in my class. The writing education we carry out through distance education has adversely impacted all my students. But my student with writing difficulties was even more affected. I cannot spare enough time and attention. My only hope is to start face-to-face education in a short time.* [Line, 175-177]." This quote expresses that the teacher is worried about this situation and also believes that the mentioned student cannot overcome this problem through distance education. Some participants (n=13) stated that students should have additional resources for more effective writing instruction.

Another category reached as a result of the analysis is about the situations originating from the parents. Codes of the category are included in Table 4.

Table 4. Situations originating from parents

Sub-category	Code	n
Situations Originating from Parents	Prioritizing and caring for other assignments	10
	Leaving the student alone in writing tasks	34
	Homework control	30
	Having difficulty in the presentation and spelling	25
	Communication	17

Some participants (n=10) emphasized, as can be understood from Table 4, that parents did not give significance to writing assignments and gave priority to assignments of other lessons. T37 states as following: "*The activities we can do here are already limited. At least, with the aid of homework, we aim to develop the writing skills of students. But some of my parents don't pay much attention to writing assignments. The same parents are more sensitive to, for example, math homework* [Line, 66-68]." The statement can be given as an example of this situation. T34 also mentions that "*My students state that their family members do not support them while doing their writing assignments. They are telling the truth because I want every assignment to be reviewed by their parents and ask them to send photos of writings to me. I see a lot of mistakes in writing assignments and none of them was marked by parents* [Line, 74-78]." And this statement implies that students do not receive support while performing their writing tasks and their homework is not checked by their parents. On the other hand, T19 said that "Some of my parents are doing a really decent job at checking homework. But when it comes to writing assignments, I see that most of them just draw attention to the aesthetics of writing, page layout, and, in particular, spelling mistakes [Line, 88-90]." In this statement, the

participant points out that the parents of the students bring awareness only to the specific dimensions of writing and that they do not intervene with student writing in terms of text features such as composition, ideas, and style. Some of the respondents (n=17) claimed that they could not receive feedback from parents about the written assignments, and while taking photographs and delivering all of the homework to teachers, some parents did not include writing assignments. From this case, the corresponding teachers deduce that the students either do not do their writing homework at all or conducted it messily and thus the parents did not deliver the homework to them.

Some recommendations were put forward by the primary school teachers who participated in the research to enable teaching writing skills to become more effective in the distance education setting. Table 5 summarizes the participants' suggestions.

Table 5. Recommendations

Sub-category	Code	n
Recommendations	Digital writing activities	17
	Online collaborative writing groups	11
	Family education	36
	Writing with parents	24
	Practicing typing with the keyboard	7

Table 5 contains the participants' suggestions for making the teaching of writing more productive during the pandemic. Some of the participants (n=17) suggested digital writing activities as an alternative to traditional writing activities. T19 states that "We learned that we cannot improve students' written expression skills through common practices. I think using digital writing programs can be better in this process. At least we can follow up easily. But teachers and students do not have enough experience in this field. [Line, 101-104]." As can be understood from this statement, both students and teachers are inexperienced in digital writing. Some participants (n=11) suggested that they could improve writing skills during the pandemic process by developing online collaborative writing groups. While the views of the T44 who tried this method are as follows:

> "*We applied this method with my students. I formed groups of two. With the help of the family, the students gathered with the video conference method and created a text. It was effective in some groups. However, the activity could not be applied in some groups. Because there is no control mechanism. If there is a student in the group who has a leadership trait and attempting to accomplish that goal, the activity would then become effective. Otherwise, the students are just having fun* [Line, 165-170]."

T44's experience shows that online collaborative group writing tasks require a supervisor to execute the whole process. However, we can conclude that the activity has positive outcomes. The majority of participants stressed the importance of parental support in this process and recommended that parents should be equipped with writing instruction. The participants intended to ensure more efficient monitoring of writing assignments given to the students and to become capable of carrying out writing activities with the parents. T49 elaborates as follows: "*As an alternative to writing using paper and pencil, we can use the keyboard for writing activities. Students may have difficulties at first. However, this may seem interesting to them. Of course, all students then must have a tablet or computer.* [Line, 88-90].*"* This statement shows that some participants (n=7) stated that typing activities with the keyboard can be used. Participants argued that student assignments prepared in the digital environment can be delivered to them even quicker. Also, the participants stressed that it would be better to monitor the homework generated in this manner.

4. Conclusion, Discussion, and Suggestions

The results of this study revealed that primary school teachers who instruct 1st-grade students during restricted face-to-face education highlighted a variety of issues relevant to their first writing teaching experience. Teachers argued that the time devoted to writing education was not sufficient in both restricted face-to-face education and distance education, as well as the poor motivation level of students. Tağa and Ünlü (2013) and Susar-Kırmızı and Akkaya (2009) report that the time allotted to writing teaching is inadequate even in face-to-face education settings. While during these pandemic days, when limited face-to-face education and distance learning approaches have been applied, it can be deemed natural that the time allotted to writing education is much lesser. A similar situation refers to the sensory characteristics of students with respect to writing. Indeed, we can come across studies reporting that primary school students have low motivation for writing when looking at pre-pandemic literature (Sarikaya & Sökmen, 2019). The studies conducted that there is a rise in negative sensory properties of primary school students, such as anxiety and depression during the pandemic process (Fan et al., 2020; Russell et al., 2020). Undoubtedly, this situation can negatively influence the academic performance of students.

Another striking fact is that the need for parent support. Studies performed also show that parent support has a very critical role when teaching writing (Taşkaya & Yetkin, 2015). Considering the period of the pandemic, lack of time, and struggles with students' first writing experience may cause teachers to seek more parental help. Besides, Anderson (2020) reports that the pandemic process in a sense forces parents to cooperate with teachers. The student absence is another variable that influences the first experience of writing in this phase. Aral, Aysu, and Kadan (2020) state that parents and

students are concerned about the chance of being infected. This situation may have caused parents not to allow their students to go to school. We can say that these findings are in line with the relevant literature.

Another point that the teachers emphasized concerning their experiences of writing teaching in a distance education setting is having difficulty in managing the class. Fiş-Erümit (2020) also reports that teachers have problems in classroom management during synchronous lessons. However, we can say that it is understandable for primary school teachers to have trouble overseeing first-grade primary school students who have not yet adjusted to the school, similar to the findings of the aforementioned study. Teachers highlighted the challenge of distance education in reviewing student writing and the failure to include the necessary feedback and corrective measures. Can (2020) notes that there are shortcomings in the areas of feedback, assessment, evaluation, and evaluation of performance in TV-based distance learning applications. In several studies conducted with students, the participants reported that they did not get adequate feedback and that this was perceived as a downside of distance learning (Fiş-Erümit, 2020; Midkiff & DaSilva, 2000). The results of the study are consistent with the conclusions of the research.

Teachers' perception regarding parents and students as insufficient in using technology is one of the findings of this study. Duban and Şen (2020) claim that the use of technology has not attracted the requisite attention in terms of education, but now individuals have become aware of the use of technology in the course of the pandemic. In order to attain the desired degree of performance in distance education, the student is expected to effectively manage the process. However, it does not seem possible for primary school first-grade students to achieve this. In this case, the student is expected to receive parental support and guidance. However, the findings of the study reveal that the participants have not got enough support from their parents. Zhang, Wang, Yang, and Wang (2020) report the potential exposure of students to the complex environment at home and their lack of parental support as probable challenges to be faced throughout the course. However, this case can be attributable to the digital literacy skills of the parents, as well as the number of children living at that home and the overall workload of the parents (Sönmez, Yıldırım & Çetinkaya, 2020). Fiş and Erümit (2020) state that both students and parents need training for digital transformation and also suggest that parents are inexperienced on this issue. The current study has shown that some of the participants have delayed writing teaching to the next semester, and some have placed more attention on reading practices. Susar-Kırmızı and Akkaya (2009) and Sarikaya and Sökmen (2019) also note that certain primary school teachers do not offer the appropriate priority to writing teaching and spend more time enhancing students' reading skills. In this context, one can argue that the results of the study support the literature.

In line with the inferences made based on the study, we observe that some situations originating from the student during the teaching of writing affect the process negatively. Participants stressed in particular that students do not attach value to writing tasks, cannot concentrate on them, are quickly bored, and do not have adequate motivation. Bayburtlu (2020) states that student engagement in native language lessons is poor and students have a motivational issue during the distance education period. This issue can be attributable to a lack of necessary feedback and corrections that are supposed to be given by the teacher. The relevant literature emphasizes that making corrections and providing feedback will directly affect the efficiency of writing activities and thus have a positive effect on students' motivation (Crehan, 1997; Temizkan, 2009). In other respect, Hyland, and Hyland (2002) expressed that students feel motivated and grant opportunities to develop themselves by the feedback provided by teachers. Unquestionably, failure to provide adequate feedback and make necessary corrections leads students to get bored easily and therefore write sloppily. Besides, the complex nature of writing (Allal, 2018; Troia, Shankland & Wolbers, 2012) can cause students to develop negative sensory attitudes towards writing. Studies that indicate that writing anxiety and low writing attitudes harm the writing teaching process can also be found (Karakaya & Ülper, 2011; Karakoç-Öztürk, 2012). In this context, one can argue that the results of the study support the literature. Another issue that needs to be considered is the students experiencing dysgraphia. Hughes and Anderson (2020) note that distance learning activities that started with the pandemic had a detrimental effect on students with special needs. Zhang, Wang, Yang, and Wang (2020) have said that during the pandemic, additional assistance should be provided to students with learning difficulties since these students could be more troubled by the process. On the other hand, Sirem and Baş (2020) report that distance education is an advantage for students with reading difficulties, contrary to the current study results.

In the study, some negative outcomes originating from the parents in the teaching of writing were also observed during the pandemic process. Primary school teachers have confirmed that parents give priority to the other assignments but not the writing tasks and leave the student alone throughout this process. Studies supporting this finding can be found in the literature. To illustrate this issue more, Tağa and Ünlü (2013) stated that families were not interested in writing education based on their socio-economic level and educational perspective and that the pressure of some families on students about multiple-choice exams had a negative influence on writing performance and related activities about writing. Therefore, this study shows that some families followed and checked the writing assignments of the student in a limited way. Even then, the results also indicate that the parents who assessed the assignments were only concerned with the presentation and spelling aspects of the writing. Regrettably, studies show that some teachers were also interested only in these two aspects of writing. Hence this attitude causes students' writings to become inadequate in terms of other qualities and aspects

(DeJarnette, 2008; Özkara, 2007). Besides, the participants reported that their failure to interact with the parents of the students has harmed the process. Primary school teachers have proposed several approaches to address the negative implications in this process regarding writing teaching practices. They suggested that digital story writing tools could be utilized, online collaborative writing groups could be established, and keyboard typing exercises may be carried out in this process. Teachers, furthermore, have also drawn attention to the matter that writing activities can be carried out with the family members after the relevant family members become educated in writing and writing assessment.

In light of the study findings, it is reasonable to suggest that teachers and students should receive training on the use of computer teaching technologies. However, these findings are not limited to the pandemic period. Therefore, it means that the results of this study can be reviewed in possible efforts to be made regarding writing practices via distance education. Telli-Yamamoto and Altun (2020) claim that distance education will no longer be an option in the future and will be the main pillar of education. In this sense, it is possible to perceive the results of current research and similar studies as valuable. Using online applications is recommended for teachers when executing writing activities. Although it may take some time, providing instant feedback to the student and making necessary corrections in the assignment can increase the quality of writing education that is performed via distance education. Furthermore, as mentioned by the primary school teachers contributing, necessary information about writing instruction can be provided to parents. In this way, parent support can be achieved when teaching writing. However, this study is limited to the opinions of 54 primary school teachers. Researchers may be advised to conduct further research with different samples. Besides, conducting semi-experimental research based on writing teaching in the setting of distance education may contribute to the literature. It is acknowledged that in face-to-face instructional settings, enough time is not dedicated to students who exhibit writing difficulties. It can be an opportunity to teach writing via distance education, particularly for students who experience writing difficulties.

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