

**Understanding Early Writing: Pre-school and Primary Teachers' Beliefs about
Writing Development and the Relationship between Espoused Beliefs,
Classroom Practice and Young Writers**

Yigit, Vahide

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Understanding Early Writing: Pre-school and Primary Teachers' Beliefs about Writing Development and the Relationship between Espoused Beliefs, Classroom Practice and Young Writers

Submitted by Vahide Yigit to the University of Exeter as a thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education, June 2018.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an understanding of early writing development in pre-school and first year classrooms through teachers' beliefs, classroom practices and children's reflections.

The study was conducted in three phases. In the first phase, the participants were 12 children from three different pre-school classrooms, which were situated in primary schools, and their teachers. The participants were observed over the course of one month at the end of the academic year in their natural classroom settings, and the teachers were interviewed at the end of the observations. These interviews elicited the teachers' beliefs about early writing development in pre-school and primary classrooms in general, and about the focus children's development in particular. The data derived from these interviews has been inductively analysed in order to understand the participants' beliefs. The lesson plans of these teachers were also collected in order to understand their aims and how they reflect these aims into their classroom practices.

In the second phase of the study, these 12 children were followed into the beginning of their first year in primary school, for about one month. These primary classrooms were each observed once a week during writing activities supervised by the teachers. These primary teachers were also interviewed at the end of the observations, in order to understand their beliefs about writing development in both pre-school and primary school, along with their views on children; also, the lesson plans were collected. In the last phase, I conducted a focus group interview with different teachers from the same schools who were working in pre-school and primary classrooms, in order to discover what they believe about each other's contexts, the problems they face in supporting children's writing skills, and what recommendations they might have.

The findings are presented in three chapters, which explore pedagogical practice, children's learning profiles, and teachers' awareness of early writing development. This study is significant in offering a picture of both pre-school and primary teachers' beliefs and practices with regards to early writing, how children respond to these two different educational settings, as well as the transition process in terms of writing development. Furthermore, the continuities, and indeed discontinuities, between these two settings, and the tensions between teachers' beliefs, practices and policy documents, have been investigated.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAQDAS	Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software
MoNE	The Ministry of National Education (Turkey)
NVivo11	A qualitative data analysis computer software package produced by QSR International
YOK	The Council of Higher Education (Turkey)
ZPD	The zone of proximal development

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning how to write is a multifaceted and long process which begins in early years and continues through adulthood. There are a variety of difficulties for young children when learning how to write, as writing requires the use of highly cognitive processes. From the cognitive perspective, there is a relationship between writing processes and the working memory which stores and processes information and sequences appropriate behaviours (Negro & Chanquoy, 2005). According to Myhill and Jones (2009), for very young children, communicating their ideas in writing can cause them problems, since they have to keep information in their working memory, which might make it more challenging for them to express their ideas in language than more experienced writers. Berninger (2009) mentioned the importance of working memory exerting constraints on written language production, by emphasising the relationship between working memory at the word-level and writing outcomes. Taking all of these demands into consideration, early years' education is critical for children in terms of developing their understandings of both print concepts and phonological awareness, which can be seen as the first steps in early literacy.

Acquiring a balance between handwriting (technical aspects of writing) and compositional elements when supporting early writers, it is equally important to approach writing as both a process and an outcome of these writing processes. For many years, writing has been seen as a product and as an outcome of the activity, instead of focusing on the process. However, a holistic approach might provide writers with a broader conceptualisation, such as the realisation of their own ideas, as well as developing and extending them in a socio-cultural context. Thus, teaching how to write demands the consideration of not only what is written, but also the act of writing. Through an understanding of these processes, teachers are better able to match teaching to learning needs. One consequence of the complex nature of writing is that the developmental pathways that we pass through on the way to becoming 'writers' are not completely understood, and the theoretical perspectives accounting for this vary. Therefore, there is also variety in determining what is 'effective' in terms of teaching strategies, and which steps should be taken when supporting young writers. Nevertheless, beyond any doubt, early years' education plays an important role in children's lives in terms of learning how to write.

Pre-school and the early years of primary school education are the contexts in which the foundational steps in becoming competent writers occur, and where children are supported in a variety of ways based on their individual needs. Indeed, the difference between novice and expert writers has been well researched (Beretier and Scardamalia, 1987; Kellogg, 1996), and this has informed how writing development has been theorised over the last 40 years within different research traditions – these differences between researchers reflect the fact that they focus on different things: be it the writer, the text, or the context (Becker, 2006), or more specifically the perspectives of cognitive psychology, linguistics and socio-cultural theory.

Ivanic (2004) has shown that there are different sets of informing principles that characterise the different approaches to writing instruction (see Section 3.4.2 – Ivanic's Discourses of Writing and Learning to Write). From my perspective, Turkey – like many developing countries – is characterised by a tendency to focus on the secretarial aspects of writing: writing is not necessarily seen as a complex and holistic area, which involves cognitive processes, socio-cultural influences and linguistic developments. Rather the emphasis on teaching how to write in this context draws attention to other aspects: it might be the accuracy of writing, transcription skills, or grammar aspects. In addition, my own experience of early years' teaching in Turkey is that teachers' practices in the classroom environment have become restricted by the limitations of a prescriptive curriculum and the external expectations of these early years teachers that children will reach pre-defined standards. In other words, their views on writing development are shaped by nationally published criteria and local judgements, which are often articulated by people such as school directors, parents, and/or their peers. Those expectations are generally based less on an understanding of classroom practice or knowledge of their individual students and more on the written product and the extent to which it conforms to common sense views of 'good writing'. In spite of these pressures, teachers' practices might also be an outcome of their own interactions and relationships with their students, their background in terms of university education, their personal beliefs or values, and their own experiences as a teacher. In addition, the backgrounds of children may vary in each classroom as well as from one school to another. Thus, the teaching of writing might depend on a diverse range of factors, yet understanding early writing development is important in terms of supporting both children and teachers.

This research is the result of a constant and professional curiosity with regards to the early writing experiences of children, and builds on my background as a pre-school teacher. More particularly, this is the outcome of my experiences with children in the classroom and children's experiences with writing. Through interactions with peers and adults, the children in my classroom were often interested in learning how to write. According to the Turkish curriculum, pre-school teachers should not teach writing formally, whereas they can support children's early writing skills through supportive activities. In order to provide appropriate support, pre-school teachers need to make judgements about what to offer and how to support children on the way to becoming writers, which reveals how they think about the needs of young writers. As a researcher, I was interested in exploring how well the support offered within the pre-school context matched what the children would experience in the first year of primary education; particularly given my personal experience that writing instruction in primary schools was often product-driven but not child-centred. Even though policy makers in Turkey have tried to change this view of writing with changes in the curriculum and by introducing inspectors who occasionally observe teachers' practices in the classroom, teaching in primary education remains teacher-centred and content-driven. My aim through this research is to enable myself to understand classroom practices in pre-school education and in the first year of primary education in the Turkish context, as well as to explore teachers' beliefs about how writing develops in the early years. My own beliefs were significant in conceiving the focus for this study, because as an early years' teacher myself, I believe that teachers in both pre-school and primary school settings need to develop a rich pedagogical knowledge of writing to become supporters of writing development, rather than teaching only writing skills. In practice, this means fostering teachers' interests in developing and understanding the complex nature of writing, as well as creating opportunities for communicating with teachers in other educational settings in order to support children on their way to becoming writers. The starting point for this research comes from a specific moment which I experienced with one of the children in my classroom during the first year of my own teaching experience. After the orientation week whereby we – as teachers – tried to help children to familiarise themselves with the routines, the school culture, and with other students in the classroom, I started to do activities with them. There were students from different backgrounds, different incomes and different home environments. I was

providing the children with opportunities to engage in different activities and experience things that they would not do in the home environment, and to develop a range of different skills such as fine motor skills, self-regulation skills and communication skills. One day, one of the children came in with a paper and a pen (we normally use pencils in the classroom), and wanted to collect signatures from the other students in the classroom which would be used to decorate the walls of the school. It was fascinating for a 5 year old boy to come up with such an idea, which suggests that children might have different understandings of the purposes of why they write. First of all, he was aware that people write with specific purposes, and that there are different genres which can fulfil these purposes (Zecker, 1999). Zecker (1999) suggests that children's knowledge of the psychosocial aspects of writing develop faster than its symbolic characteristics. In my experience with this young boy, I came to believe that there is more to discover in the children's world and that adults' responses to their needs can shape their development, especially in areas such as writing, which does not come naturally to our lives and requires fostering.

This experience suggested to me that children at pre-school age bring their own understandings of writing, and develop this understanding through what they experience in the classroom. However, this experience confirmed my belief that it is also essential to continue to support the skills that are developed in pre-school education when children move to primary school. On the one hand, primary school teachers could build on these writing skills as facilitators in teaching how to write. On the other hand, in a primary school classroom, there are students who come with prior pre-school background as well as those who do not have any pre-school experience, which might make it difficult for teachers to provide similar opportunities to all students. This is especially the case in Turkey, where primary school classrooms often consist of approximately 40 students and, generally, teachers do not have any assistance in the classroom. Therefore, this research is designed to explore what early years teachers need to do to understand and support the needs of young writers in pre-school and primary school settings, with particular regards to the changes which occur during the transition from one setting to another. In this way, I will attempt to learn more about children's experiences of writing in both settings, and the different values and beliefs of teachers in these two contexts, how they influence classroom practice, how teachers support young children on their way to becoming writers, and whether

these teachers are aware of the activities and practices taking place in the other context. In so doing, this research could contribute to an understanding of how best to support teachers' subject knowledge, and could lead to a new knowledge of writing pedagogy that addresses the integration of pre-school and primary school practices in the Turkish context. These two contexts in Turkey might represent a different pedagogic cultural context, with pre-school education having a more child-centred approach, free of curricular pressures, whereas primary education has a more product-oriented approach. The results of this study will indicate whether this assumption is borne out in practice, and will provide insights into how children's experience of writing might change in such different contexts.

In the earlier stages of childhood, young children start to respond to the print around them, and print-rich environments can help them to develop their understandings of writing. One example of these environments can be seen as the classroom environment as they include many print-based resources for children to use such as educational animations, books, posters and classroom labelling and the opportunity to talk about these resources with their peers. At such a young age, children begin to combine their experiences of speaking and listening, alongside their knowledge of writing. Therefore, they start to develop their ability to write significantly, and gradually they turn into competent writers. Hence, teachers are a key resource in early writing development, with their understanding of the ways in which they can help children with their writing abilities, the forms of young children's early writing, and their writing development, in order to be supportive of students on their way to becoming writers (Vukelich & Christie, 2004). This study addresses the role of the teacher in helping children come to understand writing and being a writer, with a particular focus on how this is shaped by the two different contexts of pre-school and primary school education.

The research is framed within a socio-cultural framework, which reflects the importance of both the culture and context of early writing. The research design of the study reflects the notion of writing as a situated social practice; it was enacted through my participation as a researcher, firstly in a pre-school setting and then following the same children into the beginning of their primary school education in the context of their school communities. An interpretive approach was adopted in order to develop an understanding of how writing is understood in pre-school and primary school

education, and how the practices, beliefs and views of teachers vary in these contexts, with the aim of observing both children and teachers as active social agents of their own writing practices and experience.

This research took place within the Turkish educational system in order to understand what changes occur between pre-school and primary school settings. Through spending time being a researcher within the two settings at this stage, I was able to contrast the experience of being a teacher with being a researcher. In addition to being involved in the two different classroom settings, I chose four children from each pre-school classroom and followed them through the first four weeks of their first year in primary education, in order to generate detailed explorations of how the children differently negotiated and responded in each setting. By observing four children in each classroom and following the same children from one context to another, I hoped to explore the differences and developments in the writing skills of children who had previous pre-school experience. Additionally, I was able to see how teachers support children's writing and which developmental areas they focus on in classroom practice, in the context of the Turkish educational curriculum.

The six main aims of the study are to specify for educators, researchers and policy makers: (a) an understanding of the relationship between classroom practice and culture and how writing is understood both by teachers and learners, and how writing practice is developed; (b) to explore this in the context of a system that might move from a child-centred approach to a product-centred approach; (c) to contrast the experiences of children in both contexts; (d) to understand how the transition is experienced by children in terms of how they experience writing support; (e) to understand how teachers variously negotiate top down pressures with their personal beliefs and practices in relation to writing pedagogy; and (f) to contribute to the field through a detailed understanding of a particular setting, thus adding to an understanding of how more generalised findings in terms of writing development can be realised in a particular context. In so doing, the research could contribute to broader debates about how writing takes place in the lives of children. Of further interest, it highlights whether early years teachers in different settings establish a link between each other in order to be more involved and supportive in the process, which might help young writers negotiate the transition from one classroom culture to another.

CHAPTER 2: TURKISH CONTEXT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter features the contextual framework of the study and the issues related to the Turkish educational system. For this study, the context is important in terms of understanding the integration of pre-school and primary school writing practices, and in recognising the role of the situational factors involved in the study, as well as making sense of the outcome of the research. Therefore, I will provide a general introduction to education in Turkey and the national curriculum, with an emphasis on Turkish instruction in general and writing instruction in particular.

2.2 THE STRUCTURE OF THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM AND CURRICULUM IN TURKEY

The Turkish education includes four levels which represents an increase in the number of compulsory years from eight to twelve: pre-school education (three to five year-olds, and not compulsory); primary education (four years); secondary education, separated into lower- and upper-secondary (four years each); and higher education (two years or more, and not compulsory). In Turkey, pupils who are three to five years old are eligible for free early learning and childcare, but it is not compulsory. In other words, the state offers free pre-school education for everyone, but taking it up it is not compulsory. Primary (ages five to 12) and secondary (up to 18 years old) education are compulsory for all Turkish citizens, which means that compulsory education takes twelve years and is referred to as the 4+4+4 education system. There are public and private institutions, which serve all levels. The official language is Turkish in all state schools and institutions. Public compulsory education is obtained free, whilst in private institutions the payment of fees is required, and the official language of teaching might be another language such as English or French.

The participants in this study are pre-school and primary school students and pre-school and primary school teachers, and so it is important to look at these educational stages to understand how teaching and learning writing occurs. The weight given to writing is one hour per day in pre-schools, and two hours per day in the first year of primary school education.

Pre-school education is seen as the educational stage which prepares children from birth to five years old for primary school by supporting their physical, mental and social

development. The level of pre-school education could be defined as the least developed stage in the Turkish educational system. As public sources do not have enough funds to support it, pre-schooling has not been improved in the same way that primary schooling has (Gunduz & Caliskan, 2013).

In primary education, which comes after pre-school education and is the first stage of compulsory education, writing, reading, maths, science and solving basic problems are the key components of the curriculum. In the primary stage, which involves children between five and 12 years, over 97% of children attend school. After primary education, children become ready for the transition to secondary school. In developing countries such as Turkey, where there are limited educational possibilities, primary schools can be seen as offering the main opportunity for children to achieve basic knowledge and abilities.

Developing the curriculum and other research and training activities are amongst the duties of MoNE (The Ministry of National Education), which involves the management of all public, foreign and minority schools. MoNE is also responsible for anything related to education in Turkey, such as the appointment of teachers and head teachers. The education programme in any school throughout the country is standardised. This system might be considered highly restrictive, as it does not support teachers, students and/or parents to create an effective learning environment (Gunduz & Caliskan, 2013). Furthermore, teachers are not encouraged to personalise their teaching based on students' individual learning needs. Nationalistic themes can often be seen in textbooks and guidelines, due to the centralised nature of the Turkish curriculum. Every minute of classroom teaching is also prescribed by the central authority.

Before proceeding to the place of writing in the Turkish education system, it is important to know the characteristics of the Turkish language, as every language has its own structure and syntax.

2.3 THE TURKISH LANGUAGE AS A WRITTEN DISCOURSE

Turkish, which has been written in the Latin alphabet since 1928, has an agglutinative morphology, and with the agglutination of suffixes to the word, there can theoretically be generated an infinite number of words (Yanikoglu & Kholmatov, 2003). There are grammatical rules specifying the words or letters which suffixes may follow and in what order; however, it is possible to generate a great number of words by adding suffixes.

There is a root morpheme concatenating to other morphemes, which forms Turkish words (Yanikoglu & Kholmatov, 2003). For example, “gid-ebil-ecek-se-niz” is a word meaning “if you are going to be able to go”, and it has four suffixes added to the root verb “git”. This is a typical verb conjugation in the Turkish language.

The modern Turkish alphabet differs from the English one by the addition of six letters (ğ, ı, ç, ş, ö and ü) and the omission of three letters (q, w, x). Hence, the Turkish alphabet has 29 letters or sounds: “a b c ç d e f g ğ h ı i j k l m n o ö p r s ş t u ü v y z”. Each of these sounds represents a stable phoneme, and they do not change their sounds under any circumstances. Also, these letters do not produce any other form of phoneme when they are combined.

All languages have structures and rules in terms of how to organise writing. These rules determine the phonological rules of each language, and a phonological rule which occurs in some languages might not occur in others. Also, a language may have certain sound sequences which are not used in others. For example, Turkish has borrowed words from other languages, such as spor, which has a word-initial position that Turkish does not allow. On the other hand, there is a grammar rule, ‘final devoicing’, which specifies that “voiced sounds become voiceless in word or syllable final position” (Yavuz & Balcı, 2011, p. 48). The word ‘kitap’ (book) can be analysed as an example. When an accusative suffix is attached to this word, -i- in this case, /p/ will become /b/, and the word will be reformed as ‘kitab-ı’ and not ‘kitap-ı’. The words ‘ağaç/ağacı’ (tree) and ‘renk-rengi’ (colour) are further examples of this.

Morphemes can have different meanings, functions and morphological standings in a language; also, a single morpheme might be composed of more than one syllable (Yavuz & Balcı, 2011). It is widespread in Turkish that morphemes sometimes do not even figure as a separate syllable. In Turkish, there are independent morphemes, and their projections in sentences do not require any other morpheme in their immediate environment (Yavuz & Balcı, 2011). These morphemes can be called free morphemes, and if a morpheme has a lexical meaning, it becomes a content morpheme. Nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs can be seen as content morphemes. Functional morphemes, such as postpositions or conjunctions, represent grammatical relationships. There are also bound morphemes in Turkish, which are fed into other morphemes to form meaningful units, and never stand alone as free forms. Complex words are formed in this language through three types of affixation, which is the

attachment process of a bound morpheme to another morpheme: “suffixation (see Table 2.1) with suffixes which are placed after the stem, prefixation (see Table 2.2) with prefixes which come before the stem, and infixation (see Table 2.3) with infixes which are within the stem by way of stem modification” (Yavuz & Balci, 2011, p. 65).

Table 2. 1: Examples of suffixation:

Stem	Suffixes			Final Form
Göz	lük	çü	ler	gözlükçüler
Bil	gi	li	dir	Bilgildir
Baş	ar	ı	lı	Başarılı

Table 2. 2: Examples of prefixation:

Stem	Prefixation	Final Form
Mahrem	Na	Namahrem
Pembe	Pes	Pespembe
Başka	Bam	Bambaşka

Table 2. 3: Examples of infixation:

Stem	Final Form
Tacir	Tüccar
Bakim	Büküm
Tevellüt	Mütevellit

As regards language teaching, the Turkish Language Curriculum for Primary Education has been adopted, and reading and writing are seen as inseparable parts of teaching the language in the curriculum; a methodical approach to Turkish language teaching is emphasised. In the national curriculum, for each of the components involved in language teaching, there are objectives and purposes, in the form of statements, for what should be fulfilled each day, month and year of the four-year long primary education.

In Turkish, there are many links and connections between roots, syllables and suffixes, which might be difficult for young writers to comprehend. According to Kirmizi and

Kasap (2013), teaching how to write cursive scripts, which is currently in the curriculum, can improve and facilitate young writers' skills in terms of creating connections in Turkish. In this way, young children can think about the details of the language on morphological grounds, as well as improving their fine motor skills, which is necessary for transcription skills and the automatisisation process. The aspects of a language can influence how to teach writing and reading to young children.

2.4 TEACHING OF WRITING IN THE EARLY YEARS IN TURKEY

The curriculum states that for the writing part of the language course in classrooms, teaching writing and reading is not simply related to developing reading and writing abilities, but also to thinking, comprehension, analysing, synthesising, contraction and evaluation (MoNE, 2015). Therefore, the aim is to achieve a writing instruction which supports learners' abilities related to the use of accurate, effective and pleasant Turkish.

In the curriculum, teaching first grade students how to write and read plays an important role, and a phonics instruction is used in all state schools. There was a shift in writing instruction in 2004 from deductive to inductive teaching, which is also, as aforementioned, defined as a sound-based approach. In this method, children are first exposed to the print environment to get themselves prepared for writing. Later, the aim is that children will be able to recognise and distinguish sounds, recognise letters and write them, constitute syllables by using these letters, constitute words by using syllables, constitute sentences by using words, and, finally, form whole meaningful texts. After achieving these steps, children are expected to be able to read and write independently. Furthermore, it is emphasised in the curriculum that the focus is on the production of effective text; the accuracy of the text might be more supported in the classroom, especially with young writers. The accuracy of the text is seen as the first step to creating effective text (Kirmizi & Kasap, 2013).

Writing instruction is a central part of the language course, along with reading instruction. In pre-school education, children begin to experience print and writing, yet they do not learn how to write until the first grade of primary school. In pre-school education, they learn basic skills such as how to hold a pen, and they are taught how to write in the school environment.

In primary education, there are generally two parts to writing lessons. Each lesson takes 45 minutes each day, and teachers focus on how to write and combine letters, as well as how to read them. Children complete writing tasks individually most of the time, and rarely work in collaboration. Cursive scripts are taught throughout primary education. The letters are divided into six groups: (1) e, l, a, n; (2) i, t, o, b, u; (3) k, l, r, ö, s, ü; (4) m, d, ş, y, c, z; (5) ç, g, p, h; and (6) f, v, ğ, j. In primary education, writing instruction begins with drawing activities and making lines. Then, it continues with the teaching of letters and constituting cursive scripts with those letters. Young writers move straight to cursive script rather than learning to print individual letters first. There might be a good case for moving straight to cursive scripts, as fluency in writing is often linked to higher performance (Kirmizi & Kasap, 2013). Teaching punctuation and the use of capital letters comes after the process of learning letters. Teachers support children on the way to becoming writers by emphasising the use of spaces between words and sentences. Children are supported to share what they write with their teachers and their peers, which can be seen as an example of how effective text is achieved in practice. Grammar is taught in the later period of schooling, such as in the second grade. It is worth mentioning that handwriting and orthography are taught prior to meaning and communication in Turkish education.

Recently, the main philosophy which underlies teaching how to write in Turkey is dependent on the view that language takes an important place in children's cognitive development, communication skills, expressing their thoughts and feelings and accessing knowledge independently. Within this perspective, students are expected to become individuals who can understand, explain, evaluate and synthesise. In order to support these skills of young writers, teachers plan the lessons based not only on the development of writing skills, but also on listening and oral skills. Children are supported to comprehend the phonic aspects of language by improving their language skills (Koc, 2012).

There are no standardised tests or examinations used to assess students' writing achievement levels in pre-school education, nor in the early years of primary school education. There is also no authorised criterion or scale used to evaluate students' writing quality. Primary teachers evaluate students' writing depending on their own knowledge and subjective judgment; rather than using numerical assessment, they often give written feedback. The absence of high stakes testing in early years'

education might be seen as a benefit, as it could create a negative impact on students' well-being, which might affect their self-esteem and lower teachers' expectations of children. It might also cause negative feelings among students, such as stress, anxiety, pressure and fear, which could emerge as a result of high stakes testing (Polesel, et al., 2012).

2.5 PHYSICAL SETTINGS AND INSTITUTIONS

When researching in an education system, it is important to look at how many children have access to education. The lack of teachers and the number of schools in a country, as well as an increasing number of students, can have an impact on the success of education systems. An inadequate number of schools can result in crowded schools and classrooms, which may lead to new problems such as a lower quality of education (Varol & Imamoglu, 2014). In Turkey, in primary education, there are on average twenty five students per classroom, whereas it is lower in pre-school education (MoNE, 2016).

There are two formal vacations during the year: the first one lasts for almost two weeks in winter, generally in January, and the second one lasts for about three months in the summer time. In other words, it can be stated that there are two semesters in Turkey. In pre-school education, the period of lessons depends on whether a child's education is full-time or part-time. It depends on whether a child receives full-time or part-time provision, if the school can offer full-time or part-time education, and the willingness of families for their children to attend part-time or full-time schooling; in special cases, if a child has any additional needs, schooling is determined with an early care specialist. In full-time education, the period is approximately 42 hours a week, and it is thirty hours a week in part-time education. In classrooms, there are tables for children to use, in individual, small groups, or in whole classroom activities. Teachers organise classrooms, by arranging the tables and the materials used in activities before beginning the activities with students. Generally, there are up to eight centres through which children can develop their skills: a block centre, art centre, dramatic play centre, table games centre, book centre, music centre and science centre. Children can play in any centre during their free time at the beginning of the day. Then, the teacher supports the children to become involved in those activities which can develop their fine motor skills, hand-eye coordination, and developing conceptual understanding

along with problem solving skills, together with their cognitive, social or emotional skills. To illustrate, a teacher can read a book to children, then discuss with the children what happened in the story, then encourage them to talk with each other about the story and how he or she could use drama to animate the story. This can be helpful in terms of supporting young children's cognitive and social development.

In primary school education, the period of lessons in a week is determined as 30 hours along with free activities; this period increases when children pass through the higher grades. Children sit in rows most of the time in school, and the teacher is in the centre of the classroom, even if it is stated that education takes place in a student-centred way (Gunduz & Caliskan, 2013). In most classrooms, there are blackboards that the teacher can use to teach writing, whereas computers are not commonly seen. Although MoNE makes efforts to increase access to computers for schools, this is still not sufficient throughout the country (Bay, 2010).

2.6 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF EDUCATION IN TURKEY

In any social system, social control of the ways to approach, organise and orientate the environment are influenced by social status categories – power – and content – norms. Culture involves knowledge, cognition, perceptions, beliefs or religion, arts, morality, legislation, tradition and any other habit of people who are members of a society, which makes it a complex whole (Usun, 2006). In Turkey, children come from a variety of cultural backgrounds and family situations, as well as from different income strata. Consequently, it is a challenge for schools to provide equal educational opportunities for all children.

On the other hand, “the contemporary Turkish political system, in spite of its pronounced authoritarian features, seems to operate within the bounds of its own constitutional order” (Isiksel, 2013, p. 704). With regards to cultural regulations, policy makers might be divided into two groups: pro-implementation and anti-implementation (Usun, 2006). Recently, the concept of classroom practices and learning has changed in Turkey and has been placed within the teaching profession; with regard to the teaching community, they might be defined as generally exhibiting resistance to implementing technological change (Usun, 2006). This change might force educators to change their roles, from being a resource for all learning to a facilitator of the teaching-learning process.

Understanding the socio-cultural context is a central issue when supporting young writers' development. Traditionally, interpersonal relationships have characterised the Turkish socio-cultural context (Usun, 2006). 'Family' is seen as one of the most influential factors in terms of children having educational opportunities. In addition to family, there are other people influencing the traditional socialisation processes, such as kin relationships or close friends, and this emphasises intimacy and deference and fidelity to family, rather than being independent and confident. These elements certainly have an impact in early years education. Turkey's dependence on oral tradition, "along with its emphasis on memorization and the inviolability of the written word, make self-learning via course books less appropriate, with students showing a preference for the practical rather than the theoretical" (Usun, 2006, p. 63).

The quality of education, on the other hand, depends on the skills and understanding of teachers in the early years. Therefore, it will be beneficial to outline the training of primary school teachers in Turkish universities.

2.7 THE EDUCATION OF TEACHERS IN UNIVERSITY – PRE-SCHOOL/PRIMARY SCHOOL

In addition to students' backgrounds in the Turkish educational system, it is beneficial to summarise the type of education that teachers receive at university. At the centre of teacher education and training in Turkey there are education faculties which are comprised of departments such as pre-school, primary school, science or maths teaching. Likewise, in all faculties and colleges at universities, pre-school and primary school teaching curriculums are regulated by YÖK (the Council of Higher Education), in order to train pre-service teachers in these educational stages. Three groups of courses are included in the curriculum, which can be identified as field, general culture and pedagogical knowledge. Field knowledge courses comprise lessons such as basic maths, basic geography, chemistry, history and teaching of writing and reading. General culture knowledge includes a variety of topics, for instance Turkish, English, history of the Turkish Revolution and computer skills.

After graduating from these departments, which takes four years in an under graduate programme, students qualify as teachers. After completing higher education, there are a variety of possible jobs in a number of foundations and organisations, for instance in private schools (pre-schools and primary schools), state schools, day care centres and universities. In spite of these opportunities, teachers generally choose to work in

public schools, as MoNE guarantees permanent positions for these people without any demand for a qualification certificate at any stage of the profession, as they have to have completed the university course which is outlined in the previous paragraph. Working in state schools, therefore, is very competitive, and a multiple-choice examination called KPSS is applied in the hiring process. This test involves questions related to general knowledge topics, such as Turkish, maths, educational sciences and general culture, and so it receives heavy criticism. These criticisms include the idea that people become pre-school or primary school teachers at state schools based on their general knowledge, but not based on their competencies in the field, which may become a problematic issue in terms of the quality of teaching that they are able to deliver. The absence of pedagogy (how teachers orchestrate classroom learning) may result in the children developing lesser skills through their schooling. Also, the aims in the curriculum might fail to be met by these teachers; therefore, how people become teachers is an important aspect in any country.

2.8 SUMMARY

In this chapter, with a specific emphasis on writing instruction in Turkey, I have discussed the contextual details in which the study takes place. The social context in Turkey has been provided by addressing the issues related to educational goals and classroom practices. The significance of teacher training programmes has also been underlined. In the next chapter, a critical review of the relevant literature will be discussed, and the main and sub-questions of the research will be raised.

CHAPTER 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Many theories have been proposed to explain what writing is and how writing develops. These theories differently inform how teachers support students on the way to becoming writers. An overarching aim of this review is to consider the theory, research and practice related to early writing development and writing instruction, which is the focus of my study. Primarily, this study is located within socio-cultural theory which views the school environment as a social construction, likely to be differently understood by the different human stakeholders: teachers, children, parents, and directors. However, looking only at the socio-cultural aspects of writing development is not sufficient in understanding early writing in broad terms. Therefore, it is important to discuss the contribution made by the three major theories in early writing: cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic throughout the review. Cognitive theory in particular offers different models of cognitive development. The models chosen for the study were limited to those explaining firstly the earliest years of writing development within the scope of the study which takes place in pre-school and primary classrooms. For example, Hayes's updated model in 2012 did not specifically explain early years writing development or instruction; therefore, I decided not to include it in cognitive theories (Hayes, 2012). Also, the selection criteria used to identify the literature was designated to include studies from 1980 to the present rarely referencing key studies before this date. The aim here was not to represent a comprehensive account of cognitive models but to draw on those that shed light on early year's development, and locating this understanding within the particular socio-cultural world of the Turkish early year's context.

In this chapter, there will be three main sections. In the first section, I will discuss theory by focusing on the contrasting approaches in writing research. In the second section, I will discuss the theories and research related to writing development in the early years. In the third and last section, the different approaches to writing instruction in the early years will be reviewed, which will be helpful in terms of understanding the relationship between teaching and learning outcomes.

3.2 THEORIES OF WRITING

In this section, I will focus on three major theoretical perspectives in writing research: cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic perspectives. These theories are worth reviewing first, as they represent different understandings about the nature of writing itself, as well as giving a broad view of what writing might be perceived to be. Moreover, they can be accepted as foundational in the field, as they have an impact on some of the subsequent research mentioned later in this literature review.

After conceptualising the writing landscape, it can be seen that writing has several dimensions. On the one hand, writing has been seen as a product which leads researchers to focus on the text itself and on the skills of writers in producing the text, and so to consider the developmental aspects of text production. On the other hand, writing has been approached as a process which can be found in studies focusing on both the cognitive aspects of writing, and on socio-cultural theories concerning how it develops within society and is shaped by the values and meanings of any society. Although it is possible to separate these theories on a product-process basis, another distinction might be considered. The cognitive perspective situates writing at the individual level, and this comes from cognitive psychology, while the socio-cultural perspective situates writing at the societal level, and is informed more by sociology. Linguistic perspectives are concerned with the written product. While these different approaches have tended to work independently of each other Harte et al (1984) indicate their overlap by discussing writing as an event through emphasising that writing enables us: 'to learn language' (linguistic), 'to learn about language' and 'to learn through language' (these latter being a more socio-cultural understanding). These perspectives then, differently inform our understanding of writing development and writing instruction. By reviewing the cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic theories of writing, I can build a foundation for my study.

3.2.1 Writing as a Cognitive Process

While it is important for researchers to be concerned about the outcome of writing processes or the written product – which can be called a product perspective – it is equally important to understand the writing processes that generate the finished product. From a cognitive perspective, writing is viewed as a complex process which leads writers to engage in problem solving using the long-term memory effectively,

and requires the implementation of motor plans (e.g. marking on the paper with a pencil) (Deane, et al., 2008). These writing problems consist of many elements, such as planning and translating ideas, considering the topic as well as the expectations of the desired audience, and reviewing the text to verify the use of correct forms and ideas throughout the text (Hayes & Flower, 1980a). Even the youngest writers face these problems, and they have to solve the problem of which words to write and how to write them.

In psychological theories related to the cognitive processes involved in writing, there have been two dominant themes. The first concerns creating content in regard to the needs of the reader, but this is not a simple process involving translating ideas to text (Galbraith, 2009). The second is that writing challenges the limited capacity of working memory with high demands, as it involves a complex interaction between different processes (Galbraith, 2009). In this review, I will outline the classical cognitive theories of writing, put forward by authors who offer contrasting models for resolving these two concerns – Hayes and Flower (1980), Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987), Berninger and Swanson (1994), Hayes (1996), Kellogg (1996) and Baddeley (2003).

3.2.1.1 Hayes and Flower's Model - 1980

Hayes and Flower (1980) made a seminal contribution to writing research, as they were among the first theorists who attempted to study writing processes experimentally. Considering their backgrounds – Hayes was a cognitive psychologist, and Flower was a composition teacher - they could use both cognitive aspects and an understanding of classroom practices to inform their composition theory. They employed the “thinking aloud” protocol, as they asked writers to say out loud everything that they think during the process of text production, and they created a model of the writing process through the analysis of protocols obtained from participants. In other words, they applied cognitive techniques to understand how writing occurs by employing think-aloud protocols, which has mostly been used in psychology to develop theories of human mentation (Smagorinsky, 1998), and modelling writing through the use of diagrams. This model is significant in terms of understanding the writing process, and so, although it does not directly relate to very young writers, it provides a basis for any research into the writing process. This model is seen as “a model of competent writers” (Hayes & Flower, 1980a, p. 29); therefore,

it does not necessarily reflect all writers, such as emergent writers, or the very young writers who will be the participants in my own study.

In their general model, Hayes and Flower (1980a) focused on three major processes at the heart of writing: (a) planning, which is comprised of three sub-processes (generation of ideas, organisation and goal setting); (b) translating these plans into a written text; and (c) reviewing, comprising reading and editing (Figure 3.1). These processes are constantly interacting during the act of writing. In the planning stage, a writer generates and organises his or her ideas, and in the next stage, ideas are translated into written language. In the reviewing process, writers make revisions to the text by detecting and correcting violations in meaning or writing conventions, as well as editing the kind of language they use in text, in the form of a grammar check (Hayes & Flower, 1980a). These processes also coordinate with two other components: the task environment, which involves the nature of the writing assignment, and the text itself, which involves the integration of new text with the text produced so far. This utilises the long-term memory, which is responsible for the retrieval of topic knowledge and concerns about the audience (Hayes & Flower, 1980a). This model represents writing as a recursive process consisting of planning, translating and reviewing, and these can repeatedly occur at any time in the production of a single text. The monitor is one of the most important aspects of Hayes and Flower's (1980a) model, as it is responsible for the coordination of these processes.

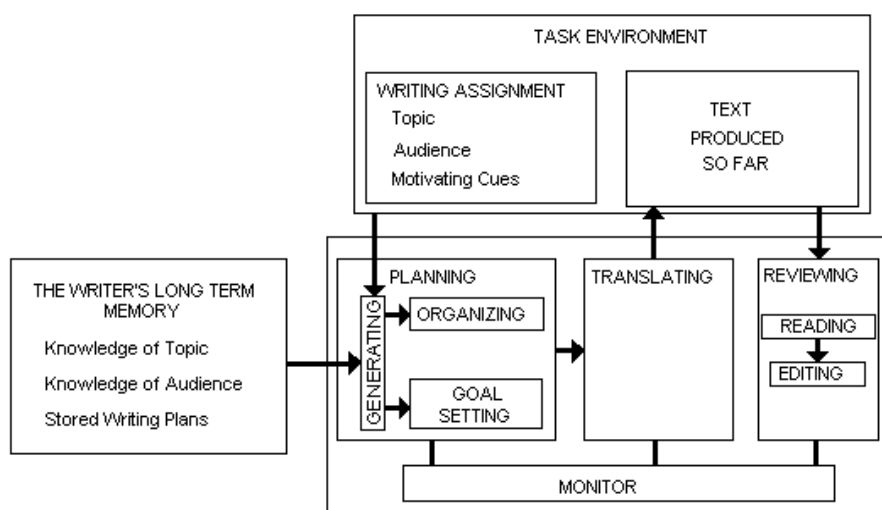


Figure 3. 1: Hayes and Flower's model of writing (1980, p.11)

Hayes and Flower (1981) criticised the 'stage models of writing', which divides writing into three stages: pre-writing, writing and re-writing, for having too sharp distinctions. Their model is also not linear, as inferred by the stage model, but rather it is iterative. With a process model, it was possible for them to include the mental processes writers go through during the act of writing. These mental processes are structured in a hierarchy in any interaction, and this allowed the researchers to compare 'the composing strategies of good and poor writers' (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 368). They found three characteristics which move a writer from being a novice to an expert: responding to all aspects of the rhetorical problem; creating a rich network of goals; and representing the problem in depth (Flower & Hayes, 1980).

Reducing human cognition into a problem-solving metaphor was seen to be arguable, in the sense that writing should be viewed as a much broader set of skills. Additionally, the demands of writing can change from one language to another (Latham, 2002). Another criticism of this model concerns the fact that it does not consider the socio-cultural aspects of writing (Kostouli, 2005). On the contrary, the model focuses on individual processes. It has been suggested in socio-cultural theories that writing is socially organised, and people write in response to different cultural practices (Dyson, 2002). The model is also criticised for ignoring the idea that writing processes may change for different types of writing (Andrews & Smith, 2011).

Despite all the criticisms of the model, Hayes and Flower's model offers a simple and valuable perspective of the cognitive processes used in writing. Especially when researching in a field related to early writing development, it provides a basis for my study by explaining the writing process. This model has been revised by several other cognitive theorists in order to address the aforementioned weaknesses.

3.2.1.2 Bereiter & Scardamalia's Model - 1987

Although both Hayes and Flower (1980) and Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) had similar research goals, namely to understand the nature of the cognitive processes involved in writing, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) were concerned with the differences between novice and expert writers, which made their model different to Hayes and Flower's (1980). Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) saw writing as both natural and yet problematic, which led them to form their model of composition. In this

model, the ideas which develop during writing are seen to depend on the strategic retrieval of content (Figure 3.2). They proposed two different models of writing. The first, simpler one – ‘knowledge telling’ – is based on the representation that writing is a natural task and enables less skilled writers to operate at this level. Content is directly retrieved from the long-term memory, employing a knowledge-telling strategy which requires solely the relationships between content ideas to be responsible for the organisation of the text. So, ideas are simply strung together as they occur to the writer, with the current idea prompting the next. This is illustrated in the novice writer’s tendency to use the ‘and then...and then...and then...’ pattern to link related ideas. On the other hand, the other model of ‘knowledge transforming’ is more complex, and explains how more skilled writers develop as the writing task matches the expanding competence. In other words, the rhetorical or communicative problem is required to be solved, and writers use the goals which are the result of this representation to generate and evaluate content while they engage in writing activities (Galbraith, 2009). Thus, knowledge transforming is illustrated by the shaping of text to meet rhetorical goals. As the skills of writers grow, the difficulties writers face tend to be higher, which leads them to use the ‘knowledge transforming’ process. In other words, writing is cognitively demanding, especially for young children; however, as certain elements become automated, such as handwriting fluency or using the phonetic system, cognitive capacity is released in order to allow writers to engage with the more rhetorical aspects of writing, rather than focusing on the secretarial aspects (Baddeley, 2003). This automatization process facilitates the transition from the ‘knowledge telling’ to the ‘knowledge transforming’ processes.

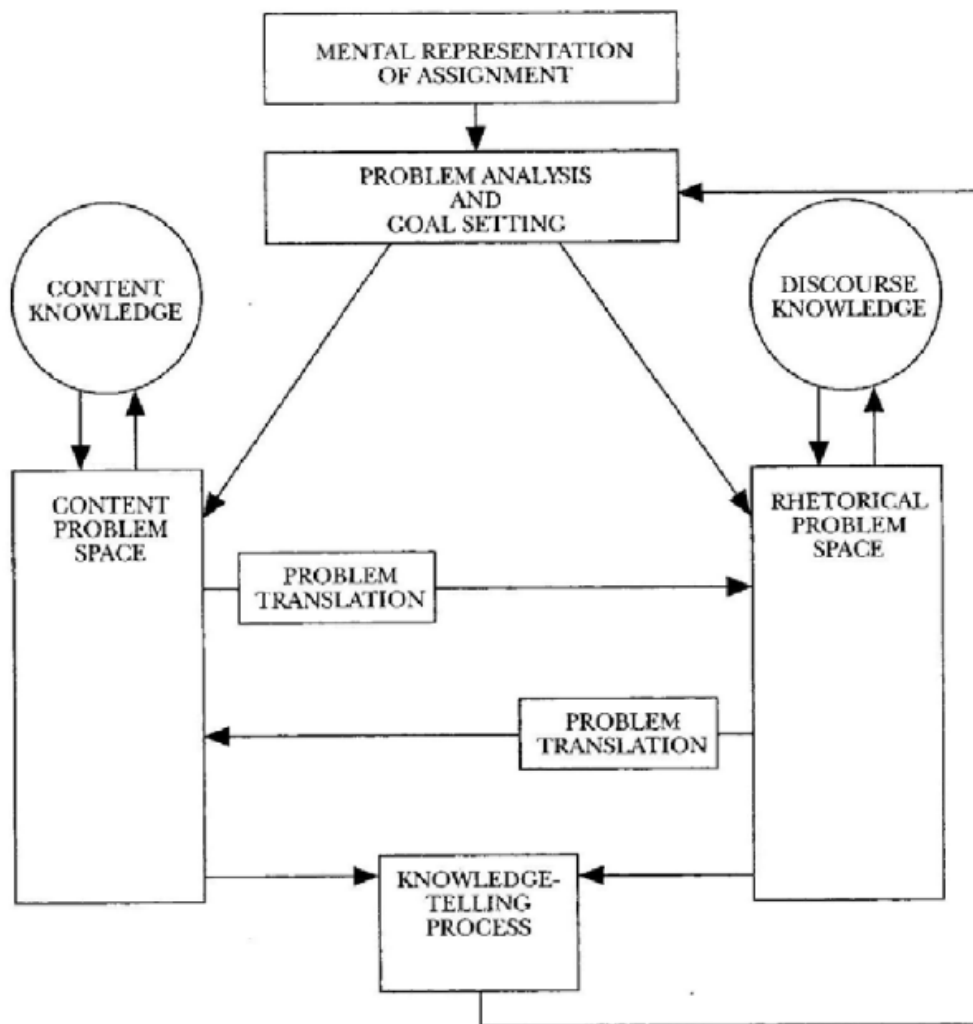


Figure 3. 2: Bereiter and Scardamalia's model of writing (1987, p.12)

Oral language holds an important place in Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) model. Writing is seen as an interaction between conversation and the 'knowledge telling' process, and the conversational support that is provided for children by supporters such as teachers or parents who facilitate cognitive processes such as 'thinking of what to say, staying on topic, and producing an intelligible whole' (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987, p. 7). Within 'knowledge telling', novice writers are provided with a natural and efficient problem-solving process without any external support; therefore, they just use their available knowledge without considering the audience, goals or rhetorical problems. Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) found that children as novice writers use this simple model more than adults, although adults can also use this model when working on unfamiliar writing tasks, or when the ideas in the text are abstract and difficult to articulate. In contrast to this model, Flower and Hayes (1980)

considered writing development to be constrained by the limits of working memory, which may cause overload problems for young writers.

When children move from the 'knowledge-telling' to the 'knowledge transforming' processes, they begin to search for content, to make plans for whole text, and to revise the text. This model also involves knowledge-telling processes; however, the problem-analysis and goal-setting phases become significant elements for cognitive activities (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). By using the thinking, revising, rethinking and rewriting processes, writers in knowledge-transforming mode can achieve their writing goals. Although some children and less proficient adult writers make unsuccessful attempts at the knowledge-transforming process, Bereiter and Scardamalia viewed knowledge transformation as being restricted to expert writers, who are generally adults.

3.2.1.3 Berninger and Swanson's Model – 1994

Both the original Hayes and Flower's model (1980) of writing and the revised model by Hayes (1996) – which will be mentioned later in this review – explain the writing processes involved in skilled writing. On the other hand, to examine writing in a pedagogical context, Berninger and Swanson's reformulation (1994) of the original model by Hayes and Flower can be seen as one of the most useful models in explaining beginning and developing writing. This model is derived from the work of Berninger with less skilled writers and children with learning disabilities (Berninger, et al., 1992). When modifying Hayes and Flower's model (1980), they considered the developmental constraints on children and the limited capacity of processing, and this resulted in three identified constraints being identified: neurodevelopmental constraint involving motor activities; linguistic constraint including syntax and vocabulary; and low-level writing skills which require limited use of planning and revising, and are focused very much on translating.

In their model, Berninger and Swanson (1994) did not change the three major writing processes from Hayes and Flower's model (1980): the planning, translating and reviewing processes remained the same. On the other hand, Berninger and Swanson (1994) focused more on the translating processes in contrast to Hayes and Flower's model (1980), which was focused on the processes included in skilled writing. Text

generation includes the transformation of ideas into linguistic representations, such as the production of words, sentences, paragraphs and construction of the text. The transcription process is seen as providing representations of thoughts in written symbols which enable phonological and orthographic coding, involving spelling and grammar, text segmentation, involving punctuation and cohesion, and fine motor skills, involving graphomotor execution (Alamargot & Fayol, 2009). Automatisation of the transcription processes plays an important role in early writing development, because the transcription processes occupy a substantial amount of children's processing capacity, which results in fewer available cognitive resources for planning and reviewing (Bourdin & Fayol, 1994). Berninger and Swanson (1994) also argued that affect, motivation and social context should be considered in terms of understanding the writing processes, which I will now outline as I address the next model by Hayes (1996).

3.2.1.4 Hayes's Model – 1996

In revising the original model by Hayes and Flower (1980a), Hayes (1996) presented a new framework and redesigned it. This new model was focused on writing processes on the basis of the task environment, which covers the social environment and the physical environment, and the basis of the individual, in which motivation, affect, working memory, long-term memory and cognitive processes can be seen (Hayes, 1996). Hayes (1996) put 'working memory' at the centre of the new model by considering phonological memory, the visual/spatial sketchpad and semantic memory as sub-processes. On the other hand, task schemas, topic knowledge, audience knowledge, linguistic knowledge and genre knowledge are seen as parts of long-term memory. Hayes (1996) reorganised the cognitive processes in the original model into three basic ones: text interpretation, reflection and text production. In this model, all of the processes interact with each other as in the original model. My study places an emphasis on early writing in classrooms; therefore, the new elements of the social environment and motivation and affect are likely to be significant in understanding the relationship between writing pedagogy and writing development.

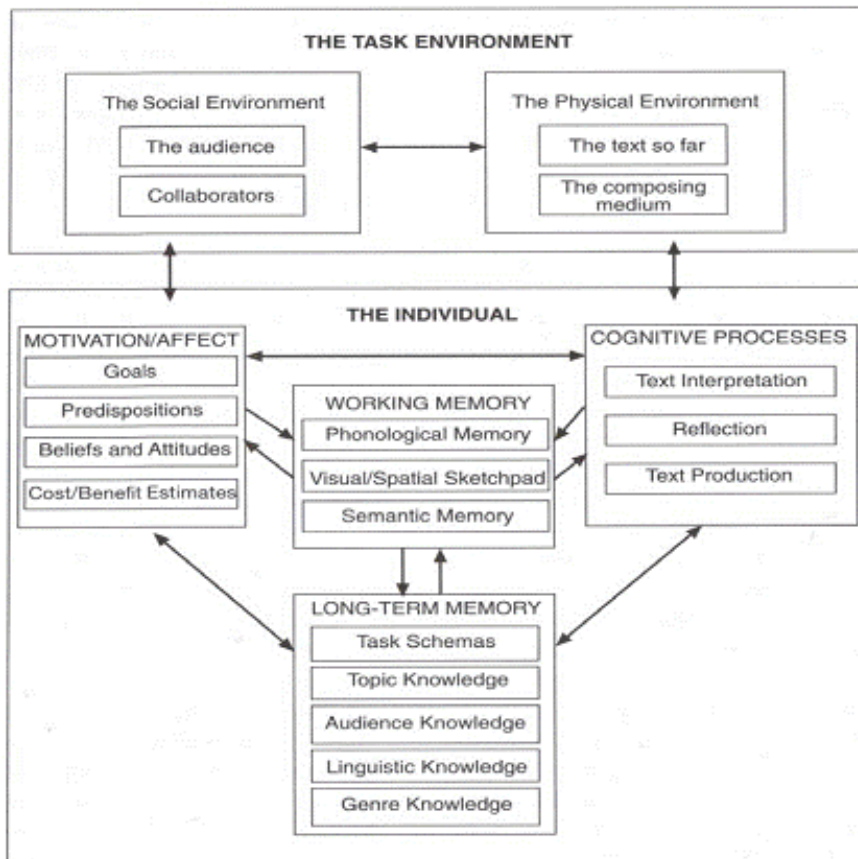


Figure 3. 3: Hayes's revised model (1996, p.4)

3.2.1.5 Kellogg's Model - 1996

Kellogg (1996) constituted a model to explain the cognitive processes underlying writing, which involves three basic language production systems: formulation, execution and monitoring. These systems interact, and each one involves two sub-subsystems: formulation (involving planning and translating), execution (programming and executing) and monitoring (reading and editing). Formulation is the system whereby writers use 'planning' to think up their goals and organise their ideas, as well as 'translating' to convert their ideas into a written message (Kellogg, 1996, p. 60). In the execution process, writers use 'programming' and 'executing' processes to create an output through translation. The last process, monitoring, involves the reading and editing processes, by creating a space for writers to check their texts for comprehension and fluency.

This model is highly similar to Hayes and Flower's (1980) original model. However, Kellogg (1996) explained all of the relationships between the systems by providing detailed information. In this model, he focused on working memory as a supportive

tool for cognition in writing (Kellogg, 1996). Taking a multimodal approach, Kellogg argued that 'speaking, listening, reading and writing use common components' (Kellogg, 1996, p. 57). The model compared speaking and writing, which was essential in the generation of the model. This model is significant in terms of my study, which takes place in the classroom environment with young writers who will come into the classroom with speech as the dominant language medium, and who will have to transfer their thoughts from oral patterns to written patterns as they learn to write.

3.2.1.6 Baddeley's Model of Working Memory

In cognitive models of writing development, working memory is seen as an essential part of the writing processes, as it is responsible for coordinating skills related to cognition. Working memory develops throughout childhood and on to adulthood, and it is a centre for both short- and long-term memories to be accessed during text generation (Berninger, 2000). Baddeley's model of working memory, which was originally developed in 1990 and revised in 2003, is used as a developmental model to conceptualise this process (Baddeley, 2003). This model has a central executive system which is comprised of two sub-systems: the articulatory loop and the visuospatial sketch pad – it is suggested that an episodic buffer should be added into the model later (seen in Figure 3.4). The central executive element is responsible for the regulation of the flow of information, the retrieval of information from other memory systems, and storing information.

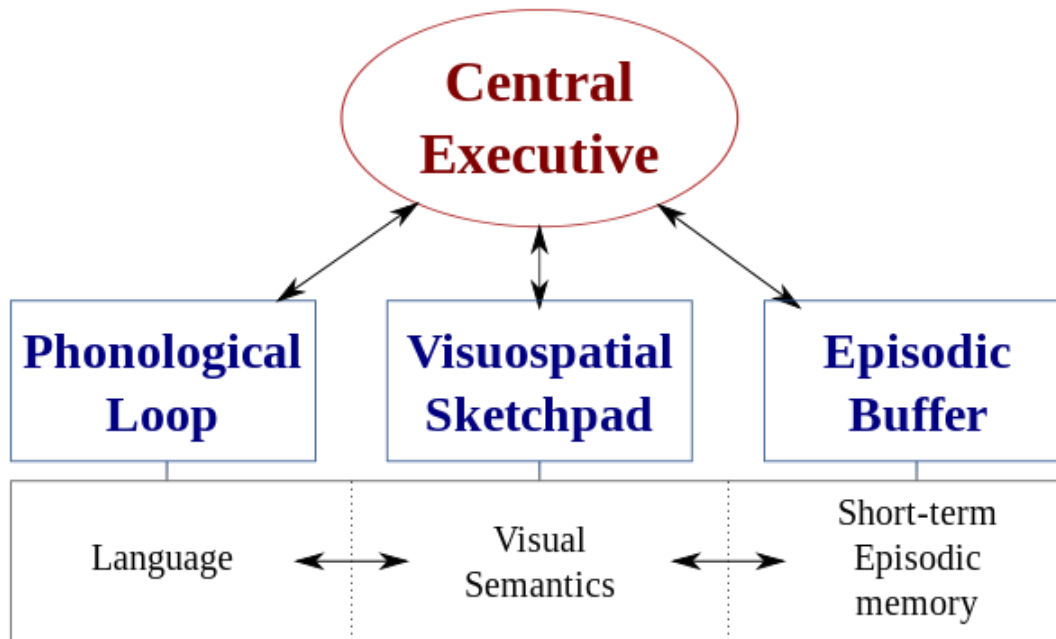


Figure 3. 4: Baddeley's model of working memory

Working memory plays an important role in terms of drawing data from the short- and long-term memory to be utilised in the act of writing. Short-term memory is a place where incoming information such as word recognition and translation is stored during the reviewing and revising processes (McCutchen, 2006). On the other hand, long-term memory involves content knowledge providing a mechanism for schemas to write for different genres, which makes it a resource for knowledge and idea creation and knowledge of discourse structure (Berninger, 2000). Long-term memory is also critical for all writers during writing, as knowledge is stored in it. Young writers can use knowledge of a topic or genre, which may help children to generate memory probes by enabling them to produce better texts as they become familiar with a topic (McCutchen, 2006).

3.2.1.7 Summary of Cognitive Processes

A shift from the product to the process perspectives has boosted how teachers, educators and researchers understand the organisation of writing processes and the differences between writers, which leads them to attach more importance to the practical processes of writing rather than the characteristics of the outcome of the writing processes. By explaining the differences between proficient writers and less proficient writers, cognitive research might be able to suggest how writers could improve their texts (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987). It also demonstrates that,

especially for young children, the shift from talking to the knowledge-telling model of writing, and eventually to knowledge-transforming, is a difficult process.

The aforementioned cognitive researchers have emphasised individual cognitive processes rather than socio-cultural ones, with the aim of constructing theoretical models. These writing models illuminate both classroom practice and research in writing, helping me to understand the conceptual framework of this study, which focuses on early writing development in pre-school and primary school. However, these models alone cannot provide prescriptions of proven techniques for all writers, so particular socio-cultural contexts for writing should be taken into consideration, along with cognitive ones. On the other hand, they do not place emphasis on the individual's needs and differences on the way to becoming writers. Thus, research in the field of understanding writing must broaden its scope and take into consideration the contextual parameters.

In the next section, the socio-cultural perspectives of writing will be extensively discussed, which can be seen as a different side of the writing continuum.

3.2.2 Writing as a Socio-cultural Practice

From a socio-cultural perspective, as with the cognitivists, development is conceived as a process rather than a product; however, writing is not seen as a process achieved as a series of stages or improved sequentially for all writers (Galbraith & Rijlaarsdam, 1999). Writing is treated as the result of interactions between the writer and outside world, which occur through the social activities in which people are involved in their daily lives, by leading them to create meanings. Through these “socially organized and symbolically mediated” (Dyson, 2002, p. 551) actions, people make sense of their activities and develop frameworks for action. As the roles of people and their responsibilities change over time, their controls of skills and concepts change as well as their interpretations of life (Dyson, 2002). People become writers through different cultural practices, and so think of writing in different ways. Dyson (2002) criticises linguistic views – using the term ‘practice-centred views’ (p. 552) – for not giving enough flexibility to writers to accommodate the different concepts of their social worlds into their writing. On the contrary, it is argued that if people are given even a small space for manoeuvring, they can transform unfamiliar practices into familiar ones, which may facilitate the learning of writing. For young children, this might be

writing-based role play through which children come to understand what writing is for, such as writing a shopping list in a play house.

Socio-cultural perspectives have radically challenged the cognitive models of writing and reshaped the theoretical understanding of cognition, knowledge and language – and how they interact – as well as reconstituting the pedagogical approaches to writing instruction (Kostouli, 2005). These approaches argue that writing is not only a reflection of cognitive processes but it also addresses the social, cultural, personal and academic backgrounds of individuals – which can be defined as a critique of the cognitive approaches to writing (Galbraith & Rijlaarsdam, 1999). Besides, writing activities are situated in socio-cultural theory as “concrete interactions that are simultaneously improvised locally and mediated by prefabricated, historically provided tools and practices” (Prior, 2006). In this way, writing is seen as a form of social action as well as a means of communication, which comes with social interactions and is mediated by language interactions (Christianakis, 2011). Harste, et al. (1982), suggested that as learning how to write is an orchestration of a complex social event, writers are faced with new hypothesis to generate and test. These hypotheses are related to “pragmatics (what language for what context), semantics (how I can say what I mean), syntax (how I get the flow of my message captured on paper), graphics (how I place-hold what I wish to say), and the orchestration of these systems (how I synchronize these systems)” (p. 117) through presenting a view of writing as a decision making process within a social context.

Looking at the use of written language in people’s everyday lives, one of the most significant outputs of written communication comes with the understanding of contemporary forms of social interaction among individuals, communities or institutions (Barton & Papen, 2010). New writing practices develop with new technologies, which reflect how people work and live, their expectations of the academic world, and their communicative ways. Writing also plays an important role in everyday practices – at home, at school or at work. Therefore, writing does not develop simultaneously with individual developments, but it is also shaped as a cross-cultural and global phenomenon (Barton & Papen, 2010).

In this section of the review, I will discuss the socio-cultural literature on writing by outlining the emphasis on Vygotsky's theory, the communicative aspect of writing, genre, and dialogical perspectives.

3.2.2.1 Vygotsky's Socio-cultural Theory - 1978

Vygotsky is one of the central figures in socio-cultural theory. He treated human consciousness as being socio-historically produced, and demonstrated that it cannot be understood without considering the interactions among people (Prior, 2006). According to Vygotsky (1978), people learn from their experiences in the social world, and apply this knowledge derived from the world into the world. It is not possible to understand and make meaning without any interaction, because both spoken and written language as communication tools are "the mediators between the external world and our internal experience of it" (Juzwik, et al., 2006, p. 173).

In Vygotsky's theory, the transformation of an interpersonal process into an intrapersonal one holds an important place: "Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first, between people (interpsychological), and then inside the child (intrapsychological)." (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 57).

According to Vygotsky (1978), children begin learning before their schooling, and they encounter school based on their own historical background. As they continue to learn, they assimilate the names of objects: by addressing and responding to questions, children internalise various knowledge and information. Therefore, Vygotsky (1978) argues that learning and development are interrelated – people are both subjects and objects of their own learning. By criticising prior methods of measuring children's mental development (e.g. giving children a variety of tasks of varying difficulty and judging their mental development through the answers they present), Vygotsky (1978) proposed a new approach to evaluating the development of children: the zone of proximal development (ZPD). ZPD is defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 79).

The acquisition of language as a means of communication between people and their environments can lead to a connection in terms of the relationship between learning and development (Vygotsky, 1978). Besides, children were not being taught written language in school, according to Vygotsky (1978); they were simply learning how to trace out letters and how to combine these letters to make words. However, in his theory, writing is seen as a second-order symbolism after the acquisition of speech, and it gradually turns into direct symbolism. Writing starts to represent sounds and words in spoken language, and then the intermediate link begins to disappear with the development of writing. In other words, “inner speech” is responsible for the development of written language, and with the use of written symbols rather than sounds, writing develops.

According to Vygotsky (1978), writing is directly connected to children’s cognition, and it is a developmental tool; therefore, children only need an appropriate environment in which to be encouraged. Writing tasks should be based on children’s daily lives and should be meaningful, as they learn throughout their experience and by making social connections.

3.2.2.2 Communicative Aspect of Writing

According to Goodman and Goodman (1979), the function of written language is communication over time and space. People, in other terms, can communicate through writing to each other who might be separated by distance or who live in different periods of time. Novels, letters, stories and articles can be given as examples of written tools of communication regardless of time and distance. Goodman (1979) discusses this comprehension of written language as stretching out when compared to oral language.

Communication, in this regard, may be one of the most important factors which motivates people to keep writing. It is a literal component of the meaning and reality which indicates that our understanding and meaning-making can occur through taking responsibility for an interpretation of an experience recorded in spoken or written text (Juzwik, et al., 2006). From this perspective, writing is not a constitution of complex internal processing or a retrieval of knowledge from working or long-term memory; it is rather about the interpretations of people of the world around them, and it is intertwined with the community in which writers are involved, the social position that

they take, and their values and actions (Juzwik, et al., 2006). Without taking up the norms of communication and interaction within society and/or culture, it is not possible to gain specific skills and become expert writers, as writing activities are situated within broader cultural norms.

From a socio-cultural perspective, understanding how writing develops as a cognitive process is not sufficient to understand how people learn to write. The communicative context, which involves the audience, how writing is understood within the community, and the disposition of the writer, are all significant in order to comprehend the writing process as a whole (Juzwik, et al., 2006). In the social world, people do not write in order to represent sounds on a piece of paper; instead, they write to someone and for something – the audience – which is the internal part of writing and is embedded within the writing (Juzwik, et al., 2006). People consider the topic, genre and style when they engage in writing activities with regard to whom they are writing. With recent developments in technology, people are more aware of their audience than they have ever been before. With the use of social networks, the means of written communication have improved, leading people to estimate their audience's reactions and interests; this has moved the audience profile from imaginary to real and known. In the context of my study on early writing, it is significant to understand when young children first consider their writing as a reader.

3.2.2.3 Genre

People do not share the same beliefs, understandings, values, assumptions or behaviours in communities, which can be defined within cultural practices. Therefore, it is not possible to measure writing development by solely considering the accomplishment of one kind of writing task (Juzwik, et al., 2006).

In writing, “knowledge about the content and style of a particular genre – its meaning, intention, or function” (Zecker, 1999, p. 484) should be seen as an important part of development. This knowledge, which considers the understanding of different communication types, is more text specific, and different genres can fulfil it. Judging writing processes solely by looking at the perceptual aspects of the outcomes of those writing processes or how these products look would be misleading. Writers apply their knowledge of written language in different ways when they are faced with different types of text throughout the writing process (Zecker, 1999).

Especially for young writers, different characteristics of a given genre have an important influence on the emergent writing systems (Juzwik, et al., 2006). According to Sulzby (1992), children's written responses can differ based on genre, and they are task dependant. Children in early years are resourceful symbol system users, and when they gradually become competent written language users, they begin to be concerned with the various requirements of the tasks they meet (Zecker, 1999). Zecker (1999) also suggests that when compared with its graphic or symbolic characteristics, knowledge of the psychosocial aspects of writing – its format and communicative aspect – develops more rapidly. Therefore, it can be said that knowledge of genre plays an important role in learning how to write.

3.2.2.4 Dialogic Perspectives

There has always been a tendency to reinforce the binary distinctions between spoken and written language, as they are often seen as two different modes of communication (Kostouli, 2005). Gradually, there has been a shift amongst socio-cultural theorists from the view that spoken and written language are independent communicative tools to a view that they are interrelated in terms of where meaning construction occurs. Moreover, it has become clear that spoken and written language as discursive forms are socio-culturally embedded; they are cross-cultural meaning making practices, and the role of orality therefore should be seen as complementary, not opposed to literacy. Indeed, orality can provide a context in which literacy can be comprehended (Kostouli, 2005). Instead of clarifying the differences between orality and literacy, research has increasingly demonstrated that they both serve to unveil socio-cultural practices by constituting 'ways with words' to communicate and negotiate meanings (Kostouli, 2005). Social practices are reflected in literacy socially, culturally and historically, which may lead to the use of spoken and written texts to fulfil a variety of social purposes (Kostouli, 2005).

Research within the socio-cultural tradition has drawn increasing attention to the social context, and the role of 'dialogue' which takes place between the teacher and the student, the student and peers, as well as with other people in the social world. This dialogue is seen as an important element in helping students to monitor their own strategies during the act of writing (McCarthy, 1994). Interactions among people lead to learning; therefore, any knowledgeable individual in a culture is important to the

learning process. 'Dialogue' can be seen as a form of assistance for people and as a facilitator for them to interact with each other, which directly affects learning to write. McCarthy (1994, p. 201) argues the role of dialogue in writing development, as learning occurs as a result of people's interactions with each other; all individuals in a society are important to the learning process. In this respect, children need assistance to learn, which is given by adults or more capable peers through dialogue. Therefore, dialogue becomes a way, a means through the internalisation of the external, social plane, which children can use as a guide to reflect their own thinking.

3.2.2.5 Summary of Socio-cultural Perspectives

By focusing on the social nature of writing, socio-cultural perspectives have broadened the scope of writing research. They have given new insight into writing by moving the researcher's attention from the process perspective of writing, which cognitive models emphasised within the individual, to the contextual parameters of teaching and learning how to become writers. When carrying out research with young children who are students in pre-school and primary schools, it is important to take into consideration the fact that writing and teaching how to write are situated practices which can occur in various contexts, involving a number of diverse pupils and teacher populations. In a socio-cultural context, their social class, the support of parents, and home literacy experiences and practices can affect young children's writing in the classroom. Studies within these socio-cultural perspectives can present different views from a wide range of resources to support children's writing and how early writing develops, by using and blending these resources which are used in different practices, both from formal and informal worlds (Dyson, 2002).

3.2.3 Writing as a Linguistic Activity

Linguistics, apart from the cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives, is concerned with the development of writing skills by considering writing as a 'system of recording language by means of visible or tactile marks' (Coulmas, 2003). There are a variety of writing systems around the world which can be understood semantically and/or phonetically (Coulmas, 2003). From a linguistic perspective, graphic and phonic units are used in order to accomplish the primary aim of writing, which is the communication of meaning (Coulmas, 2003). Phonography (sound-based writing) and semiography

(meaning-based writing), therefore, are represented as the main issues in writing from a linguistic perspective.

There are two basic points in writing as a form of communication across the various different theories: it is created by hand, and it has to be visible. In other words, writing consists of signs (which have meanings and represent an external referent) which do not come out naturally: these signs are only comprehensible with instruction (Coulmas, 2003). On the other hand, although they have shared functions and they are both forms of communication, writing is not a representation of 'speech'. While writing is a static system and it does not refer to thought or sound, speech is dynamic. All writing systems, also, have both phonetic and semantic interpretations. Written modes differ from spoken language at the levels of pronunciation, grammar and syntax, meaning, having dimensions (e.g. lexical), and genre (Parr, et al., 2009, p. 247).

A writing system consists of functional units and relationships. It is structured in terms of different linguistic levels: phonetic, phonemic, morphophonemic and lexical representations (Coulmas, 2003). Writing systems can vary, as there are logographic or word writing systems, syllabic writing systems, phonetic writing systems and other variant forms (Coulmas, 2003). Within the scope of my study, I will only refer to phonetic writing systems throughout the literature review.

According to the linguistic perspective, a written text has many components, such as letters, words, syllables and sentences, which are represented as discrete symbols. These forms are organised in spatial patterns: they can be written in vertical or horizontal lines, the beginning point can vary from left to right or right to left, and there can be a variety of conventions such as capitalisation, hyphenation, spelling or punctuation. Furthermore, a written text is relatively autonomous, and it can be decoded at any place by a number of people. The function of a written text is usually monologic; the writer performs as an individual, and the receiver also interprets it alone.

From the linguistic perspective, there are different concepts of writing skills: transcription skills involving handwriting and spelling, oral language skills, and syntactic and discourse skills. In this section, I will include transcription skills and oral language skills by placing emphasis on orthographic knowledge and morphological

awareness, in order to present a conceptual framework of the linguistic perspectives in writing.

3.2.3.1 Transcription Skills

Throughout the last century, legibility, neatness and strict motor control have been accepted as a representation of handwriting, which was the main focus in the writing curriculum (Christensen, 2009). However, recently, handwriting has not been seen as being as important or relevant as was the case before. This is because there has been a shift from handwriting as a key skill towards an emphasis on personal communication as the purpose for writing. According to Christensen (2009), the appearance of word processors has also reduced the significance of low level skills such as spelling and handwriting in writing development; this might be more true for a society involving primary classrooms in which handwriting is still in use as the main medium for writing production.

The multiplicity of linguistic processes can challenge children in terms of translating their ideas into written language in the early years: ideation (generation of ideas), syntactic awareness (writing with respect to grammar), pragmatic awareness and consideration of the audience (production of text with regard to the audience), technical accuracy (spelling), and text awareness (genre) (Christensen, 2009). After acquiring automaticity, which is an ability to recall information fluently and accurately, in the production of writing words, writers begin to sequence the linguistic elements needed (Yeung, et al., 2013). Transcription skills and writing performance share similarities, according to Yeung et al. (2013), for two reasons. The first is directly related to the motivation which comes from the recognisability of their handwriting and spelling by others, and the use of written language to communicate in time. Second, the automaticity of transcription skills leads people to use fewer working memory resources; therefore, they can reach the higher level constructive aspects of composing. However, placing more emphasis on the mechanical requirements to compose a written text may influence the complexity and coherence of content integration (Yeung, et al., 2013).

3.2.3.2 Linguistic Decision-making and Metalinguistic Understanding in Writing

Writing involves making decisions about the text, which can take place at multiple levels: ideational, syntactical, lexical, textual and presentational (Kellogg, 2008). Children's ability to use metalanguage – such as the ability to name features, structures and patterns of words, in sentences and at whole text level (QCA, 1998) – and their linguistic choices are positioned as central to their progression and development as writers. According to Myhill et al. (2016, p. 24), "Linguistic choices are not merely mechanistic or technical choices related to superficial grammatical accuracy or spelling, but a fundamental part of the writing process itself, shaping ideas and content to suit the intended rhetorical purpose." On the other hand, Becker (2006) differentiates rhetorical strategies from linguistic resources. With the expansion of linguistic sources, lexical and syntactical choices become automated, which supports fluency in writing and the freeing up of working memory (Myhill, et al., 2016).

The conceptualisation of development in linguistics is from implicit to explicit knowledge about language. According to Myhill et al. (2016), metalinguistic understanding is related to reflection on language, which may be accepted as an intentional and controlling activity. Metalinguistic understanding is important to writing development, as it supports writers' choices and allows them to control the language they produce. However, young writers might not necessarily possess sufficient metalinguistic understanding, especially when they are in pre-school and early primary school years. Young writers might not consciously deliberate over writing choices; they might have the understanding but not the metalanguage with which to express it. For example, in a study, Myhill and Jones (2006) found that secondary-age students could often articulate explicit choices when they produce text; however they were not able to express it in metalinguistic terms.

3.2.3.3 Summary of Linguistic Perspectives

Looking at the background knowledge in order to understand which roles linguistic activities play in writing development can be seen as complementary to comprehending writing as a whole system. Apart from the cognitive and socio-cultural perspectives, the linguistic perspective concerns the units of language and the relationship between these units. Comprehension of language development, as well as the role of morphology, semantics and syntax in language acquisition, can help educators, teachers and researchers to support young children on their way to becoming writers. As language is a complex system which is learned by children in early years without proper instruction, it is important to organise language at different levels to teach children how to write.

As this development is a continuum, writing should be seen as the sum of a variety of skills which develop simultaneously. In the following section, I will look at the cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic development of writing in the early years, to understand how young children become writers.

3.3 HOW WE BECOME WRITERS

Teaching and learning writing well are both challenging, as writing relies on a variety of skills and abilities. According to Moffett, “When people write, they are simultaneously drawing letters, transcribing their inner voices, plagiarizing concepts and frameworks from their culture, crafting their thoughts into language forms, and revising the inchoate thought of their inner speech. None of this is wrong, but failing to include it all is wrong.” (Moffett, 1979, p. 278). It has also been argued by Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) that children’s writing is limited in its linguistic complexity, since a balance of different types of demand is needed to achieve it (i.e. handwriting and spelling skills), along with learning how to produce language autonomously, as well as regarding the audience. It can be said that, as well as involving the interaction of cognitive and physical factors as a means of expression or communication in print, writing also promotes social, emotional and cognitive development (Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013). Besides, writing is seen as a foundational literacy skill which has an influence on children’s literacy skills, their reading development, and their overall academic achievement in school (Myhill, 2009; Christianakis, 2011; and Graham & Harris, 2009).

In spite of these challenges, writing is argued to have a ‘central’ place in education, as “young people who do not have the ability to transform thoughts, experiences, and ideas into written words are in danger of losing touch with the joy of inquiry, the sense of intellectual curiosity, and the inestimable satisfaction of acquiring wisdom that are the touchstones of humanity” (Graham & Perin, 2007, p. 1). So, although there are many challenges for young children on the way to becoming writers, its significance for the wider development of literacy means that it is important for writing pedagogy to understand how writing develops in order to support and help them on their way.

There has been a body of work drawing on different research fields over the last few decades, which has charted the writing development of young children. Research on the development of writing extends far beyond placing writing in one single paradigm; and so, looking at the different paradigms in terms of the development of children’s writing can help a researcher to understand ‘writing’ as a whole. Therefore, I will discuss these different perspectives on how children become writers from the cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic views.

3.3.1 Writing Development from a Cognitive Perspective

In addition to its communicative purposes and being a social event between the writer and the audience, such as in novels or letters, writing is also a cognitive act accomplished by an individual writer by using a variety of processes such as revising. Writers need to consider the audience, which is mostly distant, both spatially and temporally; for instance, writing a letter to a friend who lives in another town (McCutchen, 2006). However, the cognitive models of skilled writing outlined in the previous section describe what happens when we can write, but do not offer an explanation of how children become writers (Berninger, 1999). Writing in the early years tends to focus on the formulation or translation stage, which is comprised of text generation (idea and content generation) and transcription (including spelling and handwriting) (Mackie, et al., 2013).

The formulation stage can be seen as a bridge from thoughts into words, and the transition of ideas into linguistic representations in the mind. As seen in the theoretical perspectives earlier, the translation stage involves the selection of ideas, then putting the ideas selected into words and sentences, and structuring sentences into paragraphs by turning linguistic representations into the symbols of writing, which enables others to read and understand. This stage is important in understanding how children become writers and how they can create meaningful texts, which is more cognitively demanding than speech (McCutchen, 2006). Translation is the first emerging writing skill which is essential to the development of writing skills. On the other hand, models of writing processes do not mention the role of oral language in writing, and there is evidence suggesting that oral language and verbal reasoning affect compositional quality in young children's writing, which will be discussed in the section on linguistic perspectives (Mackie, et al., 2013). To perform translation, which includes text generation (turning ideas into mental language) and transcription (transcribing this mental language into written language) (Wray & Medwell, 2006), two aspects are important: graphomotor skills and linguistics. Graphomotor skills, which also involve fine motor skills, have an indirect influence on transcription, whereas linguistics skills, such as phonological and orthographic skills, have a direct effect on transcription (Swanson & Berninger, 1996).

Graphomotor skills play a vital role in enabling young writers to reach the ultimate goal of the writing process: written output. It is not possible to show the higher order skill of

writing without developing these low-level motor skills. When a child discovers that he or she can make a mark using a pen or any other writing instrument, graphomotor skills begin to develop. According to Berninger (2000), writing skills develop from graphomotor skills through a predictable route: scribbling, making lines, letter-like symbols, true letters, and the formation of words, clauses and sentences. In the beginning, children learn how to form letters accurately, and over time letter formation can be produced automatically. This automatisisation process minimises the cognitive energy spent on creating letters, which allows cognitive capacity to be freed to focus on higher-order cognitive processes (Baddeley, 2003).

Executive functions, i.e. goal setting, planning, reviewing, revising and the overall regulation of writing, are seen as the higher-order skills which allow writers to produce an organised, cohesive and understandable text (Berninger & Winn, 2006). As mentioned earlier, two strategic behaviours – planning and revising – play a critical role in writing development, from the first attempts at translation to the more purposeful attempts to produce a text that conveys meaning. Planning entails goal setting, the generation of content, and organisational processes in developing text (McCutchen, 2006). Clearly, a great number of writers, which might also include young children, engage in a planning stage when they begin to write. However, it has been found that young children often experience difficulties separating the planning stage from writing (McCutchen, 2006). When comparing skilled and less skilled writers, Graham and Harris (2009) summarise four features in relation to the planning and revising stages. First of all, skilled writers use ‘planning’ before writing more than less skilled writers, although more of their effort is spent on planning than revising. Second, they argue that both the planning and revising stages in writing development become more sophisticated as children get older, yet this cannot be seen as comprising the ‘fixed’ stages of development, as these behaviours – especially revising – may vary based on individual differences. Third, these behaviours developed in writers generally predict writing performance by facilitating the transformation of thoughts to paper (Jacobs, 2004). However, the correlations between planning and writing performance can change from one study to another, and the effect of revising behaviour is generally related to high school performance, which will affect the later development of writers. Finally, the teaching of how to make plans or how to revise has a positive effect on writers’ development. The earliest writing instruction focuses on transcription by

placing the emphasis on motor skills, phonics and orthography, which is supported by the knowledge of writing development which comes from the cognitive perspectives. However, this development itself might be characterised by the way planning and revising are integrated into the skills of the developing writer, and this might be indicative of the individual differences in writing behaviour. Therefore, the planning and revising stages, along with other executive functions, can be argued to play an important role in writing development. However, the limits on young children's working memory makes the planning and revising stages difficult to address, as they might only focus on the 'local' task of writing words, not the whole task.

Spelling, as part of the transcription process, represents a considerable challenge for children who are developing their writing (Berninger & Swanson, 1994). Poor spelling skills can affect the readability of the text, since dysfluent word retrieval processes can demand higher use of limited cognitive resources (McCutchen, 2006). In their study, Graham, Harris and Chorzempa (2002) found that spelling instruction has a positive influence on children's writing fluency. In the proposed stage model of spelling, Gentry (1982) describes five stages of spelling extending throughout children's schooling. In the first stage, the precommunicative stage, children begin to use alphabetic symbols to represent language. In this stage, spelling is often unreadable, as the relationship between symbols and the sounds of words are hardly recognisable; children are not aware of letter-sound relationships, and so they might write longer letter strings in order to represent bigger objects. In the semiphonetic stage of spelling, phonological strategies begin to emerge in children's writing, as they can relate some letters to sounds. In order to represent entire words, children might use the names of letters, and they become sensitive to vowel and consonant distributions throughout words (McCutchen, 2006). In the phonetic stage, children's writing demonstrates a more complete representation of the phonological structures often along with unconventional orthography, such as EGL for 'eagle'. On the other hand, phonic awareness follows naturally through motor skills, which can be seen as the building blocks of writing development from a process perspective. Children, after the phonetic stage, gradually move on to the transitional stage and finally to conventional spelling, by observing and comprehending more orthographic conventions. McCutchen argues that children's early spelling, after a period of play with letter-like symbols, is characterised by "their awareness of phonological information, followed by

increasingly sophisticated awareness of the relationships between phonology, orthography, and morphology” (McCutchen, 2006, p. 120).

Fluency in handwriting is dependent on the development of motor skills and the increasing automatisisation of coding and decoding text through the development of phonology, morphology and orthography. Like spelling, children become more capable of controlling their handwriting as they get older (Berninger & Swanson, 1994). Handwritten transcription demands the use of motor and cognitive skills, and requires a great amount of effort for young children. In order to develop and function well, young writers need to use the limited resources of their working memory (McCutchen, 2006). Transcription related measures, such as the retrieval of letters from memory, are seen as strong predictors of writing quality in the early years (Berninger & Swanson, 1994). Bourdin and Fayol argue that as the capacity of working memory is limited and every component of writing causes a cognitive load, “every increase in the load devoted to the activity of one component would lead to a decrease in the remaining resources for the other components” (Bourdin & Fayol, 1994, p. 591). These low-level activities also consume more resources in children than in adults, since the automatisisation of these activities has not yet been achieved in children, which has a negative influence on the performance of higher activities (Bourdin & Fayol, 1994). Thus, it can be seen that transcription comes with a high cognitive cost for young writers; however, when handwriting processes become more fluent, text generation and other writing processes become less restricted by transcription (McCutchen, 2006).

From a cognitive perspective, writing is seen as a process with a focus on individuals, and how writing develops is mostly related to the cognitive acts of young children. A focus on the writing process, which does not take any account of what a child thinks writing is, or what it is for, or who uses it and for which purposes, would miss the fact that the “basic notion of a solid foundation for child writing is itself situated in a fluid world of cultural and linguistic diversity and rapidly changing literacy practices” (Dyson, 2006, p. 8). It also does not recognise that writing development is differently informed by the varied socio-cultural contexts of individual children.

3.3.2 Writing Development from a Socio-cultural Perspective

From a socio-cultural perspective, development is seen as the transformation of socially shared experiences into internalised processes (Davidson, 2010). It begins with interacting with others in society leading a child to be socialised, which

emphasises the importance of the family, community and society in the development of skills. The thinking of a particular group can have the power to shape children's emerging thinking, particularly how children comprehend their environments and how they interpret the world (Davidson, 2010). Therefore, it can be argued that children bring their cultural experiences and their knowledge of text to their interpretation of written language, as it is experienced within the school context.

Moffett (1979) and Vygotsky (1978) emphasise that writing represents 'inner speech', which can be seen as a link between emergent thought and spoken language. Thus, it is important for children to experience an environment which has a variety of opportunities for them to be immersed in social semiotic (meaning-making) paradigms based on dialogue, and where all forms of language (thought, spoken or written) provide supported for children to express themselves and enhance the development of coherent, embodied and proficient inner speech (Jones, 2015). This supportive environment is important, since children interiorise their new experiences, information and thoughts through their "expanding and deepening schemas..., or internal frames of reference that enable them to interact with, and understand their worlds in increasingly complex ways" (Jones, 2015, p. 65). Dyson (2002) views children's use of language as a resource that is the beginning of writing development. For most children, the first experiences in their life such as speaking take place at home, through communicating with parents, relatives, family members and friends. According to Christianakis (2011), young children can develop an understanding of the communicative purposes of writing and a responsive audience, as they experience writing as "a dialogic endeavour involving collaboration within social interactions" (p. 26).

Harste, et al. (1982) discussed that written language growth is parallel to oral language development. In their study with three four-year-old pre-school students from different backgrounds – English, Arabic and Hebrew –, they found out that writing is learned naturally similar to oral development and that from these ongoing natural encounters which begins prior to schooling, children are active learners in literate societies which enable them to comprehend and control their worlds in print and so children perceive writing in an organized, systematic and identifiable way. Integrating the developing skill into an an existing social context in which writing holds a particular set of values and purposes.

In addition to the contributions of talking at home to writing development, writing experiences based on interactions in the home also allow children the freedom of access to different meaning-making modes which play important roles in producing text, such as pictures, music or drama (Nixon & Topping, 2001). This symbol-weaving process can allow children to interact with a variety of semiotic tools and support their development of a personal voice, as well as providing an environment for self-expression.

There have been many studies examining the effects of multimodal tools (e.g. speaking, writing and drawing) functioning together in children's writing as a means of communication (Donaldson & Cooper, 2013). For instance, Goodman (1984) argues for writing development as a component of a more general language development. Goodman (1986) also proposes that it is misleading to simplify language learning as concerned with controlled vocabulary, teaching phonic principles, copying skills and spelling. He rather suggests that children bring their own knowledge of text along with their own experiences and values through making sense of a text. There are several ways for writing to fulfil these communicative needs. According to Dyson (2002), the multimodal tools of drawing, writing and speaking have a function as social mediators. Children also bring their social worlds informed by technology (especially media) into the school environment, and these social worlds are visualised by children in terms of textual resources (Dyson, 1999).

Dyson (2002) also argues that there are many textual toys surrounding children which create a childhood culture: incorporating the media (radio, television and movie characters), their families, teachers and friends. Children manipulate the symbolic material in their oral rehearsal, singing and playing through their daily lives, and these textual toys shape their composing. She discusses how the desire for the uniformity of writing for all children cannot be achieved, as each child brings his or her own communicative experiences to school; therefore, school literacy should consider the existing childhood literacies that children bring to the classroom. Providing children with the flexible and purposeful use of writing can lead them to position themselves within an expanding social and literate landscape. Children have a diverse and idiosyncratic knowledge of letter forms and print-sound relationships, which comes from their print experiences in their families and communities. "The "where" of the beginning of school learning is not in the sole hands of the curriculum developer, the

test maker, the teacher. It is negotiated with children.” (Dyson, 2002, p. 561). From a socio-cultural perspective, children’s participation in a variety of practices which come from their socio-cultural environment enables them to accumulate resources. There are four concepts that matter in Dyson’s socio-cultural approach: (a) active children – responding to and making sense of the situations; (b) active adults – realising children’s potential to interact with others; (c) time – causing a change in children’s methods of participation in writing activities; and (d) practices – informing children’s actions (Dyson, 2002, p. 570). Adults may not be aware of how children construct the links between texts and contexts. There would be no learning if children simply did what adults asked them to do, and each child is different from others in terms of their foundational experience of language, culture and family.

Children give writing a meaning even before schooling by constructing knowledge of what writing is and the function of print (Freeman, 1989). Acquisition of writing skills and knowledge of writing occur through interaction with the wider community environment (Frank, 2009). In this environment, writing is an interactive process which enables children through constructive means and inventing knowledge (Mayer, 2007). Helping parents to write shopping lists, writing birthday cards, or writing letters to distant family members are examples of how children can make sense of what writing is. Children can also be involved in a variety of print activities and discussions with family members about written forms such as road signs, advertising or any visual print in their neighbourhoods (Mayer, 2007). Freeman (1989) studied children’s awareness of why they write and the value they attribute to writing and writing events. She found that children have a variety of writing concepts: communicating with others, letter writing, identifying oneself to others, relaying messages from someone else, as part of a transaction, as a memory device, individual expression, and learning (Freeman, 1989, p. 335). She also points out that these results can reveal children’s knowledge of the social meaning attached to writing (*ibid*).

With the transition to school, children are often faced with ‘school writing’ that can be seen as different to the writing they have experienced at home, which is often more fluid, organic and interactive; school writing in contrast might be seen as less meaningful for children and less creative (Nixon & Topping, 2001). The mechanics of writing, such as orthography, punctuation and neatness, are emphasised in school writing, as well as focusing on monomodal text production (pen to paper), the accuracy

of handwriting, and conformity (Jones, 2015). This kind of school writing can lack interactive engagement with others and dialogic purposes; rather it focuses on grading and fulfilling the curriculum (Jones, 2015). According to Moffett (1979), much school writing does not encourage students to comprehend the power of writing and to establish their voices, as it places emphasis on non-dialogic writing activities and assessment objectives; instead this kind of writing can cause the constriction of children's creative expression and opportunities to understand the possibilities of literacy.

School writing and writing at school, on the other hand, need not represent the same characteristics. According to Jones (2015), when participants are given sufficient time and communicative opportunities in the classroom or at home, they often write with enthusiasm. In her study, she found that children enjoyed writing in a variety of contexts such as writing letters to children in different cultures, story writing, persuasive writing for a responsive audience, and report writing on meaningful and interesting topics (Jones, 2015). These activities help children to participate in the real world and to progress to establishing themselves as meaning makers when creating a text through constructing their social and literate identities (Jones, 2015).

In her study, which involved two year old pupils and their teachers, Rowe (2008) describes a number of social contracts with regards to written texts; she uses the term 'social contract', as children's knowledge of writing is socially interacted. She found that the negotiations between children and their teachers show the characteristics of social contracts: the physical features of texts - such as text boundaries and figure-ground distinctions - the representational systems of art and writing - such as the distinctive forms and meanings of writing - and the relations between people and text objects - such as text ownership and obligations to read texts (Rowe, 2008, p. 66). For example, when children develop comprehension of the use of writing and drawing as two different forms of marks (a distinctive-forms contract), they begin to use different marks for drawing and writing throughout a task, and respond the questions such as, 'Did you write or draw?' or, 'What did you write/draw?'

Children gain knowledge of writing processes and how to write by observing and interacting with more advanced writers (Chapman, 1996). This requires that children engage with the specific characteristics of different written communicative genres (Mayer, 2007). In order to express themselves, children should understand that written

and oral languages have different characteristics and purposes, which requires them to engage in writing based on different genres or text styles (Mayer, 2007). According to Zecker (1999), children's attempts to reproduce the conventional genre forms are indications of children's knowledge of how writing functions as a communicative tool, and how the format and stylistic conventions of different texts can change from one to another.

Cognitive psychology has conceived of writing development as being concerned with the increased capacity to automatise the writing process in order to free up cognitive capacity to attend to higher order skills. Thus, development means cognitive development. Socio-cultural research has conceived of writing development as being concerned with providing a varied set of cultural experiences in order to understand writing as a relevant meaning-making activity, and has seen development as being concerned with socialisation into a literate culture. Neither, however, considers the text itself, and what development might look like in terms of the written word.

3.3.3 Writing Development from a Linguistic and Literacy Perspective

The linguistic production of writing is an outcome of both cognitive and socio-cultural processes, and understanding how children develop the composing process can help researchers, teachers and policymakers to form a fully conceptualised pedagogy of writing. Conceptualising writing as design, Myhill (2008) argues that writing is a creative design and an expression of meaning in terms of the choices writers make on a lexical and linguistic level which allow them to be designers. On the way to learning how to write, linguistic competence plays an important role in enabling writers to produce language outputs confidently, as well as shaping their texts to suit their audience and purpose (Myhill, 2008).

When dealing with writing, children must develop an understanding of the visual aspects of writing (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982) and the written units involved, which have a different form to the chained utterances of speech (Myhill, 2008), in moving from oral utterances to graphic representations. I will discuss in this next section the role of oral rehearsal, drawing, scribbling, emergent forms of writing and orthography and encoding skills in the development of writing.

3.3.3.1 Oral Rehearsal

One of the most thoroughly researched areas of writing development in relation to linguistic development is the linguistic demands of speech and writing (Myhill, 2010). Writing has been described as a written form of 'talk'; however, speech and writing are two different and alternative forms of language, which have different natures and different communicative contexts. Children can use a variety of sources during the writing process which are not dependent on talk. Also, Myhill and Jones (2009) draw attention to the syntactical differences between writing and speaking: the syntactical units in writing are longer and more embedded than speech. It is also argued that writing is more lexically dense as it includes the use of a range of vocabulary, and the passive forms are used in writing more than in spoken language (Myhill & Jones, 2009). Spoken language, on the other hand, which children develop in their early years, can form a constraint on both the ability to comprehend text and to write (Latham, 2002). 'Talk' forms a basic foundation for learning to write, and facilitates writing in the early ages of schooling as well as supporting and propelling forward writing abilities.

Vygotsky's (1978) work is seen as constructing a foundational basis for the role of talk in learning, as talking, thinking and learning are interrelated and supportive, in his view. According to Howe (1992), paraphrased and cited in Myhill and Jones (2009, p. 266), "Through talking, we can formulate ideas for the first time, crystallising inner thoughts into substance and shaping our ideas into existence; we can reformulate our ideas so that our thinking and understanding is clarified, focused or modified; we can communicate our ideas with other people through interaction and feedback; and we can reflect upon our learning through talk."

According to Latham (2002), spoken language continues to develop over many years and across many situations, as a result of interaction, communication and cultural and cross-cultural transaction with others in the world. In this respect, both spoken and written languages are seen as linguistic processes, as Britton (1970) argued (cited in Jones, 2015), as writing grows from talk, which is more accessible to children as a form of communication to express and develop their ideas. Early research indicates that children use a variety of linguistic devices, first in spoken form, and they carry these devices from speech to writing in a period of consolidation (Donaldson & Cooper, 2013). Children enjoy talking about what they think about their writing, and to

represent their opinions as a verbal expression of their ideas is a more convenient and easier method of communication for children than writing (Jones, 2015).

There is research which shows that talk has an important place and is catalytic in children's writing development (Dyson, 1999; Laman, 2011; McCarthey, 1994). However, the cognitive aspects of the written language of children demand more than oral language production, since writing has mechanical sides which demand higher aspects of language production from limited cognitive resources (Bourdin & Fayol, 1994). Besides, oral language and writing are different with regards to the types of discourse context (Myhill & Jones, 2009). Although written language can be seen as a monologue in terms of the prototypical context, where readers and/or the audience are generally not physically present, this context is a dialogue for spoken language production, as the audience is present and so contributes to discourse production (Donaldson & Cooper, 2013).

According to Myhill (2010), children learn quickly the differences between oral and written structures. Young children can understand that marks on the paper represent language, which can be described as an understanding of the symbolic features of written language as they begin to comprehend the relationship between print and speech (talk and writing) (Rowe, 2008). According to Zecker (1999), when children understand this relationship, they can better understand what is mapped in writing and how this mapping works. Children initially think that each letter represents a syllable, and then they comprehend the letter-sound relationship (Zecker, 1999). With age, children translate their thoughts or spoken language into a variety of systems of emergent writing, such as scribbles, random letters or invented spelling, as they become familiar with how to compose a text.

Schools play an important role in developing children's oral abilities by placing an emphasis on the interactive modes of communication in the classroom, rather than teacher-centred activities which place children in a passive role in the traditional way of teaching. By creating classrooms which support children to speak about and collaborate in the process of writing, schools can create an environment for the development of individual students' writing (Myhill & Jones, 2009).

3.3.3.2 Drawing

Drawing is a natural part of the pre-writing stage which helps young children to develop and flesh out their own ideas. According to Norris et al. (1998), as children progress in abstract thought and become more capable, a shift from representing the self as visual to textual occurs as an outcome of this process. In a study involving young children, Jones (2015) found that writing activities which provide children with a rich environment in which to produce ideas through drawing prior to writing can help them in their writing development. Also, in another study, involving students aged between eight and nine in the US, it was found that students who are given the opportunity to draw before writing have a tendency to produce more words and sentences and to generate new ideas; besides that, their overall writing performance was higher than that of the control group (Norris, et al., 1998). The students who were able to draw first were observed to be more enthusiastic than the children who simply wrote stories without any interaction with drawing. Integrating drawing and writing could be motivational for students in terms of encouraging them to write and enjoy themselves while writing (Norris, et al., 1998).

There has been considerable research on the development of writing in the early ages that has focused on children's abilities as drawers in the first place, and then gradually becoming writers. In recent research, employing pictorials has been seen as a social, motivational, cultural and expressive form for children, which creates a space for them to mediate their social interactions and situate their own texts. On the other hand, drawings produced by children have specific meanings which are reflections of children's free associations and their expressions of personalities, as well as their perceptions of worlds (Milne & Greenway, 1999). In other words, children represent what they are exposed to in their daily lives, and they use drawings as an opportunity to represent their thoughts.

Schools have many opportunities for children to experience print, such as texts, a range of materials and practices, which clarifies the importance of literacy. In kindergarten and pre-school education, children begin to communicate by drawing on unlined paper which has space for all forms of communication, which may or may not include early attempts at writing. In subsequent years, the school environment changes and children are given lined paper and no wide-scape or unlined materials, which can be seen as putting ideological and developmental pressure on children with

a shift from pictorial representations to alphabetic ones. In school curricula, alphabetic literacies play a dominant role through structural mechanisms such as textbooks, while pictorial forms are increasingly under-valued (Christianakis, 2011). Visual literacies are not always approved in school learning, especially if they are related to popular and media culture (Christianakis, 2011). Also, there is pressure from society which has an influence on undermining drawing and promoting writing, as people accept written literacy as a preferred form of cultural capital (Christianakis, 2011). In other words, reliance on writing can lead to an increased ignorance of visual literacy, which can result in children becoming visually illiterate. However, if drawing and writing are given the same importance and are allowed to develop along parallel lines, the interdependence between writers and artists would be more obvious (Frank, 2009).

In the early years, writing development and classroom literacy are facilitated by drawing. According to the literature, there are a variety of ways in which drawing helps in the development of writing. First of all, drawing inspires young children on the way to learning writing, as they do not have “sufficient control of print conventions to enable self-expression using text alone” (Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013, p. 22). Second, in order to maintain their ideas, children use drawing as a transitional support (DuCharme, 1990, cited in Christianakis, 2011). Emergent writers who do not have enough competence in writing a complex text might use drawing and pictures for the recruitment of context and the completion of their texts (Christianakis, 2011). On the other hand, the relationship between drawing and writing is essential for children on the way to becoming writers, because mental images, environmental influences and children’s need to communicate their ideas can lead them to draw in order to communicate, and this can be seen as the beginning of becoming a writer (Frank, 2009).

To communicate their ideas, children depend partly on pictures which can support their thinking in relation to writing and drawing as two different graphic systems, which combine to produce texts efficiently (Christianakis, 2011). According to Frank (2009), images are different to writing, and they are not related to each other. When children comprehend that words are powerful tools which can be used to state their thoughts, and that images can have limitations in terms of communicating efficiently, they begin to write more whilst leaving drawing behind (Frank, 2009).

As Bissex (1980, p. 202) states, “Although the close relationship between drawing and writing is commonplace in histories of writing systems, our society regards drawing primarily as pictorial and writing primarily as phonetic and thus the relation between the two is less evident to adults than to children, who are not yet as fully acculturated.” However, the view that drawing and writing are two distinct systems has changed over the past few decades. They both include the use of a number of the same psychomotor skills and cognitive abilities; besides, both are systems of sign-making carrying a ‘meaning’ (Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013). However, as drawing is a more flexible and invented sign system, it does not require learned interpretation and remains unconstrained. On the contrary, writing systems are determined by the socio-cultural context and are constrained by rules, which make them a closed system (Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013). Therefore, it can be seen that drawing is a form of self-expression in its own right, and so contributes to early writing development.

Dyson (2001) views the beginning of the deliberate act of composing as play and drawing. It is also argued that drawing enables children to reach the potential for rich expression and complex learning; the interaction of talk and drawing is often parallel, as well as being a mutually transformative process (Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013). In her study, Christianakis (2011) discusses the way and the reason why children separate or integrate drawing and writing as two distinct forms, and the effects of classroom writing practices on this. She found that school practices encourage students to erase their use of drawing and writing together, so that they can prove their readiness for school.

3.3.3.3 Scribbling

Although scribbling can be undervalued by some teachers or parents, it has an important place in writing development similar to the place of babbling in speech (Frank, 2009). Baghban (2007), highlighted the value of scribbling by replacing children’s writing tools with ones that did not produce any marks, and found that children lost interest as they scribbled without leaving any traces. Scribbling is not a stage that does not support writing; instead, it is important for children on the way to becoming writers.

Scribbling is seen as a facilitator for the conversion from drawing to writing. Drawing and scribbling together develop children’s later writing behaviour (Clay, 1995, cited in

Christianakis, 2011). Scribbling can give children enough space to practice writing as well as initiating writing. Also, it is argued that scribbling differs from drawing, because it can emulate writing by acting as a graphic form (Gibson and Levin, 1975, cited in Christianakis, 2011).

Baghban (2007) has defined four different stages related to scribbling in children. The first one is random scribbling, which may occur from one to two and a half years, and in this stage children can make marks on themselves, papers, walls and windows. In the localised scribbling stage, from eighteen months to three years, children begin to separate appropriate and inappropriate surfaces on which to make marks. At this same age, children develop patterning involving large circles, which Baghban (2007) calls controlled scribbling. In the last stage, which is scribbling, children aged between three and four years old are able to comment on what they have marked or drawn on the paper, and thus name the scribbles they have made. Children's scribbles in this stage can be seen as indications that they understand more about how print and stories work (Baskwill & Harkins, 2009).

Comparing children's oral language development with the scribbling stages of Baghban (2007), children's engagement in both activities can be seen as developing along parallel lines. According to Shagoury, there is a continuum for language development. In normal oral development there are five steps, which are matched with the five steps of normal written development on the road to literacy: (1) the babbling period – scribble writing; (2) pointing and one-word categorising – beginning representation; (3) first words and growing vocabulary – sound-symbol relationship; (4) simple sentences – beginning narrative; and finally (5) grammatical capability – using writing to get things done. Shagoury (2009) shows how the babbling period in oral development correlates to scribble writing. Children simultaneously produce symbols on paper as a representation of a concept and pointing and using one-word categorising. Observing the speaking, drawing and scribbling processes of young children can help researchers understand how children slowly become writers.

According to Rowe, children in kindergarten begin by writing with scribbles, and they move to writing-like forms which include "linearity, appropriate directional patterns and individual units" (Rowe, 2008, p. 66).

3.3.3.4 Emergent Forms of Writing

Writing development generally begins between three and five years old, during pre-school years, and extends from kindergarten to first grade. Children, first, develop an understanding of how written language works in developing their emergent writing skills. According to Fox and Saracho (1990) and Lomax and McGee (1987), comprehension of the aim of writing presents the first skill developed by children along with understanding how print works and writing concepts as a mean of communication. 'Emergent writing' can be defined, then, as the period in which children begin to comprehend writing as a form of communication, and improve their understanding of how their marks on paper can convey a message (Mayer, 2007). Emergent forms of writing involve scribbling, name writing, the direction of written language systems such as from left to right, and the creation of letter-like forms or random strings of letters in the first attempts of children to use print as a communication tool (Mayer, 2007).

Emergent writing research has been focused on a variety of possible skills such as writing letters (Clay, 1985 and Hiebert, 1978, 1981), name writing (Bloodgood, 1999 and Levin, et. al, 2005), drawing and scribbling (Levin & Bus, 2003) and spelling (Bothde Vries and Bus, 2008; 2009 and Puranik et al., 2011). Understanding emergent writing has progressed alongside different models of writing development. For instance, enhancing Hayes and Flower's framework (1980), Juel, et al. (1986) argued for a "simple view of writing" by discussing two components of writing: spelling and ideation. Berninger et al. (2002) developed this new model and proposed that writing has different components: text generation (word, sentence and discourse), transcription (spelling, handwriting) and cognitive processes (planning and revising). All of which need attention in relation to children's emergent understanding. While according to Wagner et al. (2011), when researching into children's writing development from emergent writing to a more conventional form, any model should involve macro-organization such as idea organization, productivity such as the diversity of words, complexity such as the density of syntax, handwriting such as fluency, and accuracy such as spelling and punctuation.

Children, on the way to becoming writers, continually experience different forms of writing. By adding new forms to their knowledge base, older forms of writing continue to be seen; however, this occurs with less and less frequency (Mayer, 2007). On the other hand, even young children become aware of the representative function of

letters, and the characteristics of lower levels of development may still be observed in children's writing which is designed to sustain the message they are trying to convey. For instance, in Turkey, children might draw pictures to represent unknown words at the beginning of the first year of schooling, but this is seen less in older students' classrooms.

According to Drouin and Harmon (2009), letter knowledge and writing skills can be observed to emerge at about the same time, and this is a consequence of the standard pre-school curriculum. In this curriculum, writing is introduced as a complementary practice to teaching letters (NAEYC, 1998), and these two activities (letter knowledge and writing skills) share commonalities such as the opportunity to make a connection between graphemes (letter forms) and letter sounds (Drouin & Harmon, 2009). Both emergent writing and letter knowledge skills are important parts of emergent literacy, and provide the foundation for later literacy development.

3.3.3.5 Orthography and Encoding Skills

In order to develop advanced writing skills, orthographic competencies play a crucial role in children's lives. In other words, beginner writers need to develop a rapid and correct mastery of phoneme-grapheme correspondences. Children may become more aware of the phonological aspects of spelling than the morphological ones. According to McCutchen (2006), after a period of experiencing letter-like symbols, children's awareness of phonological information supports their formalised spelling attempts, which is followed by their perceptions of phonology, orthography and morphology. This is also supported in the beginning of primary education by drawing activities at the beginning of instruction, followed by line-work and teaching how to write letters during Turkish language lessons. Ehri (2005) suggests that this alphabetic knowledge facilitates the way in which children learn new vocabulary words. Pinto et al. (2012) distinguishes learning the alphabet into pre-alphabetic, partial, full and consolidated alphabetic phases, depending on the type of alphabetic knowledge used to form connections. However, these alphabetic phases develop transparently when characterising sight word learning.

The incomplete acquisition of orthography may result in a challenge to access the semantic, syntactic and textual components of writing. For instance, children might be influenced directly when creating a text or making a summary when learning how to

write, or indirect effects might be seen, such as in terms of academic motivation (Pinto, et al., 2012). These orthographic difficulties result in creating risks in children's knowledge of writing on their way to becoming advanced writers. According to Pinto et al. (2012), there may even be severe consequences of a lack of mastery of instrumental abilities, such as the general development of school abilities.

3.3.3.6 Ferreiro's Levels of Literacy in Early Writing Development

Ferreiro et al. (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982; Ferreiro, 1985; Ferreiro, 1994) developed an approach to literacy acquisition in the early years by viewing literacy as an emergent process which takes root before the beginning of formal instruction, and children's learning of literacy begins before the actual reading and writing phase. Ferreiro views writing as a cultural object which enables children to experience communication actively in order to understand. Children, in the beginning, are faced with the challenges of chaotic data when exploring and understanding the written world, and they form assimilatory schemes or theories to make sense of it. With the help of these theories of literacy, children become able to transform and eventually reconstruct it.

Ferreiro attempted to find out what writing represents for children (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982). She regards reading and writing development in the early years (preliterate period) as an indication of children's conceptions of writing, which shapes Ferreiro's identifications of commonalities in the process that young children experience on their way to becoming literate through categorising specific levels of literacy.

Based on Ferreiro's views, children identify how they are going to distinguish writing from other graphical representations such as pictures, drawings or symbols. In order to acquire this, children identify how the forms are arranged, such as in linear order. Then, Ferreiro discusses two theories of how children develop an understanding of what is good writing. The first one, which she calls as 'The Minimum Quantity Hypothesis', is that a piece of writing is constructed with at least two or three letters. The second one, 'The Hypothesis of Intra-Relational Qualitative Variation', is that not all the same letters are used to construct a piece of writing. In this pre-syllabic phase, children do not match writing to the linguistic form of speech, and they are usually able to distinguish between written and read pieces.

At the syllabic level, children can compare different pieces of writing with each other, and they show the first attempts to explore the similarities and differences between them. As well as using letters in writing, children begin to understand that certain words are constructed with certain letters, and that the number of letters in a word is not arbitrary. In this stage, Ferreiro talks about the phonetisation period, in which children try to create a link between pieces of sound with letters, which leads them to form 'The Syllabic Hypothesis': letters represent syllables.

Gradually, children become able to match phonemes to letters, which Ferreiro calls the alphabetic level. In the beginning, children might retain the syllabic hypothesis by adding a number of phonemic representations. Then, as children encounter the alphabetic principle, they can use letters for the representation of phonemes. In this respect, there is a shift in children's emphasis on the alphabetic principle through adopting the writing system as whole.

Ferreiro worked with Spanish-speaking children, therefore Ferreiro's theory would have to apply differently to children whose language is not alphabetic. In this respect, Turkish is an alphabetic language, therefore it is beneficial to use this approach when looking into early writing development in this study. The important thing is how children progress with the experience of different linguistic levels and how they become literate, which can be seen as one the main aims of this study.

3.3.4 Summary of Writing Development

Writing is a complex process for young children, which requires cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic developments in order for them to become competent. Writers need to formulate their ideas, then translate those ideas into written symbols, which is a way to communicate with the world and a representation of their own worlds. This process can be highly demanding in the early years; therefore, it is important to understand which steps young writers take on the way to learning how to write. In this section, I have reviewed writing development from three different perspectives: cognitive, socio-cultural, and linguistic and literacy perspectives. Accepting writing development as a continuum which begins from early ages and proceeds as writers grow, I have discussed how a young child might turn into a young writer.

In the next section, I will discuss writing instruction by providing different approaches and practices related to classroom writing.

3.4 WRITING INSTRUCTION

“Excellent instruction builds on what children already know, and can do, and provides knowledge, skills, and dispositions for lifelong learning. Children need to learn not only the technical skills of reading and writing but also how to use these tools to better their thinking and reasoning.”

(Neuman, 1998, cited in NAEYC, 1998, pp. 32).

Writing is a complex skill which involves the interaction of both cognitive and physical factors, including the use of hand-eye coordination as well as the use of both sides of the brain (Mackenzie, 2011). Developing as a writer is dependent on a variety of different areas of instruction in the early years, such as phonemic awareness and phonics, and writing is also comprised of many valuable smaller skills which are necessary to becoming a more competent writer, including grammar, spelling and punctuation (Berninger & Amtmann, 2003). In addition, creativity is one of the most important elements in writing, as writers shape their thoughts into written words and then revise what they have already written in line with their own creative intentions.

Writing is an important way of expressing thoughts into words, and it is essential for a literate life. It is often seen as “a linear progression, from scribbles and mock writing to invented spellings that map sounds onto written letters leading eventually to readable and increasingly complex text” (Mackenzie, 2011, p. 323). Yet, children develop their writing skills simultaneously at many levels. For example, the understanding of phonics may be ahead of or behind children’s fine motor skills, which allow them to form print. Children also may have a more developed vocabulary than they are able to write or spell, which can explain the fact that writing development does not occur on a linear basis. Most children come to school with print experience, which can vary depending on children’s home environments, and they usually have the abilities of talking, playing, telling stories and drawing to express themselves. On the other side, there might be some children who have an extensive experience of hearing and interpreting texts. All of these children with varying levels of language experience, regardless of which skills they have in writing comprehension, will require guidance and support in school. Writing instruction becomes highly important at this point, in

order to provide children with a nurturing, supporting and encouraging environment as they progress.

There is no one way of teaching how to write in schools; on the contrary, there are a number of approaches to the teaching of writing, and their effectiveness may vary from one educational culture to another. Comprehensive instruction is required for all students; therefore, teachers should feel comfortable adjusting their instructional approaches in order to meet individual learners' needs.

There have been a number of studies which characterise writing instruction into two main categories (Cutler & Graham, 2008). The first category can be described as traditional instruction, and it is typically more teacher-directed and focuses on discrete skills. Textbooks and worksheets are usually organised by considering a series of skills when teaching writing. Traditional writing instruction uses less authentic (e.g. interesting or motivating) writing skills, and grammar and conventions are seen as being among the most important elements in writing instruction (McCarthy & Ro, 2011). In traditional instruction, the written product is seen as more important than the writing process (Troia, 2007). In the second category of process instruction, teachers initiate workshops by sharing writing and/or providing mini lessons in process approaches. The teacher tries to respond to the needs of students by organising activities as a whole class, in small groups, or based on individuals. In contrast to traditional approaches, students can choose their own topics and genres, and a number of activities are used in the classroom, such as peer conferences (McCarthy & Ro, 2011).

It could be that representing writing instruction from this diverse perspective represents a false dichotomy rarely seen in practice. The different abilities of children, different socio-cultural contexts, and the structures of educational systems require a combination of perspectives for effective learning. Peterson (2012) argues that an informed writing curriculum should consider "writers' use of textual and rhetorical tools/information, writers' thinking processes, their social/communicative intentions and purposes and the values ascribed to particular intentions, texts, and ways of communicating", as writing is a complex social practice. Thus, the process and product discourses should be given equal importance. Writing instruction which pays attention to process over product may result in ignorance of the role of writing as a communication tool which depends on conventions (e.g. spelling, grammar and

punctuation), as well as communication methods in different contexts (Peterson, 2012). Likewise, if the emphasis is given to written products over process, teaching practices may pay little attention to the thinking processes children use during the act of writing and the decision-making process (Peterson, 2012).

3.4.1 A Historical View on Writing Approaches

It is important to look at the history of the 'writing paradigm', which has differently impacted students, researchers, teachers and policy-makers, and has taken up the discourses described above in different ways at different times.

Andrews and Smith (2011) characterise the teaching of writing approaches in an English-speaking context in four phases, beginning with the 1950s, by differentiating them as pre-computer (the first two phases) and informed by ICT (the last two phases):

1950s to 1960s: The writing approach was based on assumptions about "quality within a limited range of genres derived from nineteenth-century rhetorical categories" (Andrews & Smith, 2011, p. 4). The emphasis was on the finished product rather than the intensifying processes involved in writing.

1960s/1970s to early 1980s: During this period there was a shift from a product-based approach to a 'personal voice', and recognition of the complex interdependency of speech and writing (Andrews & Smith, 2011).

1980s to early 2000s: In response to work in the field of cognitive psychology, there was an increasing focus on writing processes (see Hayes & Flower (1980a) as an example), and on the new models for novice and expert writers (see Bereiter & Scardamalia (1987) as an example). The emphasis was on planning, generating and reviewing processes without ignoring the importance of the use of 'personal voice' in writing (Andrews & Smith, 2011).

Mid-1990s to the present: Perhaps as a reaction to the cognitive approach of the 1980s, with an emphasis on writing as a problem for the brain to manage, the 1990s saw an emphasis on the socio-cultural aspects of writing – highlighting the functions of writing in the wider society, and seeing school writing as an artefact of the school environment (see Dyson, 2002). Furthermore, the relationship between writing and multimodal communication has become one of the most important changes in writing practices. Thus, since the mid-90s there has been a shift from an emphasis on cognitive processes (drafting and editing) to design, and from a single 'personal voice'

to a multiplicity of voices (Andrews & Smith, 2011). Accessibility of informational technologies such as computers and mobile phones has brought broader access and the convenience of academic and social space for children, as well as a requirement for keyboard skills (Andrews & Smith, 2011).

Looking at the changes which have taken place through the decades, it can be seen that there are many aspects shaping the current literacy and writing curriculum, such as finding a place for writing in the digital age, and the recognition of the reciprocity of reading and writing as well as speaking and writing.

3.4.2 Ivanic's Discourses of Writing and Learning to Write

Different conceptualisations of how children become writers and how teachers support them, along with their beliefs and practices, can comprise a basis for understanding writing instruction. In this respect, Ivanic (2004) presents a framework in which she explains six discourses on the teaching of writing with the purpose of analysing different types of data. Ivanic (2004) groups together particular ways of conceptualising writing, learning to write, policy and practice in relation to literacy education in these six discourses. It is beneficial to mention Ivanic's discourses with the support of relevant literature in order to understand the different approaches to writing instruction, and to see how different theoretical perspectives have informed instructional practices.

Ivanic describes the discourses on writing as “constellations of beliefs about writing, beliefs about learning to write, ways of talking about writing, and the sorts of approaches to teaching and assessment which are likely to be associated with these beliefs” (2004, p. 224). While examining different discourses, she identifies layers which combine to form a comprehensive view of language (Figure 3.5).

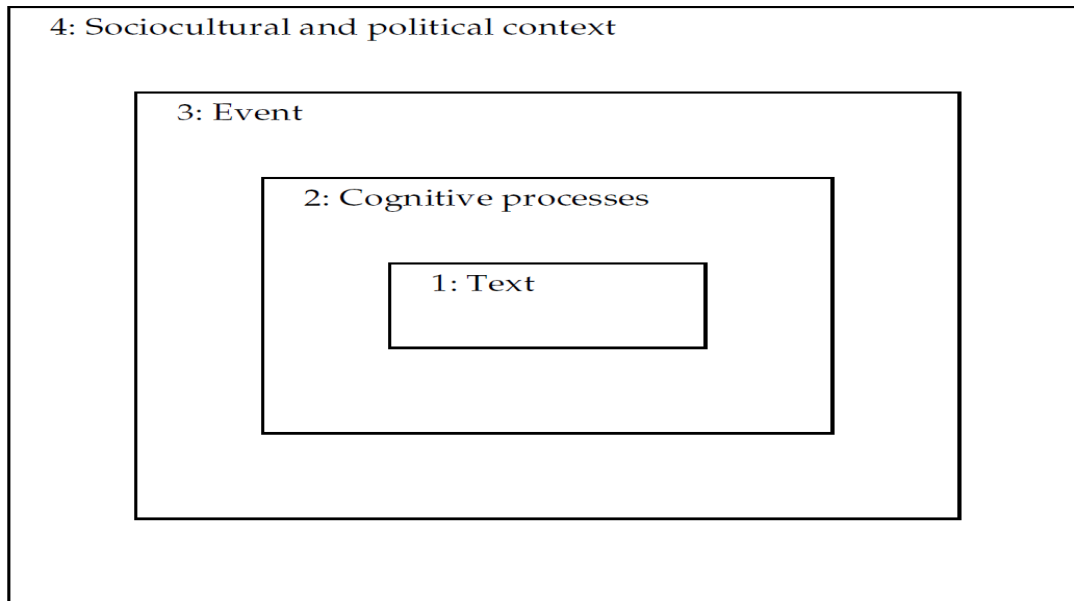


Figure 3. 5: A multi-layered view of language (Ivanic, 2004, p. 223)

As can be seen in Figure 3.5, Ivanic's model is composed of a series of layers in which the smallest square positioned at the centre is the linguistic substance of text. The second and broader view of language is described as the cognitive processes involving the production and comprehension of language. Event, in layer 3, represents a comprehensive view of language which involves "the observable characteristics of the immediate social context in which language is being used, including the purposes for language use, the social interaction, the particulars of time and place" (Ivanic, 2004, p. 223). The most inclusive view of language in this figure consists of discourses, genres and multimodal practices, which are socio-culturally available communication resources and are supported by the cultural context. Each of these layers is viewed as a necessary component in the creation of a writing curriculum to support children's writing development, to enhance and improve the ways of teaching writing, and to understand the social purposes of writing. Ivanic identifies six discourses, and I will discuss four of them here in order to understand the different ways of teaching children how to write in the early years, and how these ways might affect writing development and writing comprehension.

3.4.2.1 Skills Discourse

In this discourse, the development of students' skills such as spelling, punctuation and grammar is at the centre of instruction. This traditional approach emphasises correctness in writing and the systematic teaching of skills, whereas more progressive

approaches pay attention to incidental and informal methods of learning (Graham & Harris, 2002). A set of linguistic patterns and learning the sound-symbol relationships, as well as how to construct sentences, are considered as fundamental in terms of policy and practice in literacy education (Ivanic, 2004). In this view, context or text type is downplayed, and it is believed that writing mainly consists of the same patterns and rules which can be applied to all texts (Ivanic, 2004). When assessing writing, the determination of good writing depends on whether the letters, words, sentences and text formation are correct. The focus is on words and sentences as well as the construction of longer stretches of text through prescribing cohesive links and structures related to paragraphs, without considering text type (Ivanic, 2004).

According to Ivanic, within the skills discourse, “Learning to write involves learning the sound–symbol relationships which generate well-formed words, syntactic patterns which generate well-formed sentences, and looser patternings of cohesion within and between paragraphs which are characteristic of well-formed texts.” (2004, p. 227). Therefore, we can say that the skills approach prioritises the linguistic features of writing development, and children are taught how to spell, how to create grammatically correct sentences, and how to use punctuation and capitalisation with little consideration of social contexts or the cognitive stages through which writers pass. Writing is also seen as a different skill to ‘reading’; therefore, documents which support classroom activities are designed to have separate sections for each skill.

We can consider phonics skills or code-based approaches as being situated within the skills discourse, which is accepted as the bottom-up processing of writing from lower to higher level knowledge (Gaitas & Martins, 2015). It is argued within this approach that novice writers should comprehend individual letter-sound relationships in order to recognise and write words accurately and in correct forms, by repetition and practice (Ehri, et al., 2001). According to this approach, “Children must learn to convert unfamiliar printed words into their familiar spoken forms by learning the correspondence between graphemes and phonemes.” (Gaitas & Martins, 2015, p. 493). Naming and writing letters, rhyming words and creating letter-sound relationships are typical strategies for teachers who adopt a phonics approach in the writing classroom (Gavriilidou, et al., 2012).

3.4.2.2 Creativity Discourse

This discourse perceives writing as the outcome of the author's creativity, and the focus is again on the written text; however, rather than linguistic features, content and style are valued (Ivanic, 2004). The creativity approach puts 'meaning' at the centre of writing instruction, by arguing that even young writers engage in meaning-making activities during writing. In other words, along with an understanding of the characteristics of the text, mental processes are essential to creating a text. From this perspective, the aim of writing is to attract or entertain the reader as a creative author, and to choose topics of interest to them (Ivanic, 2004).

In this view, acquiring writing skills depends on writing as much as possible. When students write more they develop their writings more, provided they are given "the opportunity to write on interesting, inspiring, and personally relevant topics" (Ivanic, 2004, p. 229). Another argument informing the creativity approach is that the good writings of others can create a model and a stimulus which facilitates the composition process.

The focus is on the students' creativity and choosing topics based on their interests, personal narrative and descriptions, as well as discussions on what writers know about the genre. Therefore, 'good writing' is based on the text's content and style, rather than its accuracy (Ivanic, 2004).

In the creativity approach, the teaching of writing is seen as being similar to the teaching of reading, as reading provides examples of good writing, and giving feedback on what is written is one of the pedagogic strategies underlying this approach. Although the teaching of writing within this approach is mainly based on implicit learning, vocabulary choice may be taught explicitly in order to connect reading and writing (Ivanic, 2004).

An approach to writing instruction influenced by the creativity discourse, known as whole language instruction or meaning-based instruction, emphasises that students should enjoy a rich experience with the written language as a whole immediately after beginning school, by learning how to write their own stories or by reading books (Gaitas & Martins, 2015). Reading and writing are seen as complementary communicative activities. It is argued in this top-down process that if children are provided with a print-rich environment and encouraged to explore print, they will become literate (Maddox & Feng, 2013). Reading stories to children, using context to

distinguish words and supporting children to write about their own experiences are valued among meaning-based activities (Gaitas & Martins, 2015).

3.4.2.3 Social Practices Discourse

The event of writing becomes much more important in the social practices discourse, and extends beyond the linguistic appropriateness of the text. The writing process and product are seen as inextricable within the whole complex social interaction, as the social purposes of writing are directly linked to the meaning and social interaction that makes up the communicative event (Ivanic, 2004). Ivanic describes this conceptualisation of writing as “patterns of participation, gender preferences, networks of support and collaboration, patterns of use of time, space, tools, technology and resources, the interaction of writing with reading and of written language with other semiotic modes, the symbolic meanings of literacy, and the broader social goals which literacy serves in the lives of people and institutions” (2004, p. 234).

According to Peterson (2012), functional approaches – situated in the social practices discourse – can be seen as bringing an innovation to teaching genres, or leading to a new approach that he calls the ‘New Rhetoric approach’. Teachers who adopt these approaches, just like in the genre discourse, allow students to write for a variety of social purposes by teaching them to comprehend that writing in particular social contexts requires particular features, considering the social meanings and values of writing and the power issues involved (Ivanic, 2004). The aim of these approaches is to prepare people for particular settings, such as the writing requirements of a job, or learning additional languages (Ivanic, 2004). According to Ivanic (2004), these approaches can be situated in the social practices approach as they involve a variety of social purposes; however, they can also be a part of the skills discourse, as they are concerned with how to prepare writers for specific tasks.

Students participate in socially situated literacy events in order to learn how to write; therefore, we can see that the learning of writing occurs implicitly. As well as the composition and construction of linguistic text, the questions of “by whom, how, when, at what speed, where, in what conditions, with what media and for what purposes texts are written” (Ivanic, 2004, p. 235) are important within the social practices discourse. Therefore, it can be suggested that within this view good writing is assessed in terms of the effectiveness of the text in achieving social goals, and that these can only be

assessed after seeing the impact of a text. In education, it is not easy to implement these kinds of assessment criteria, as examiners or teachers of writing undertake writing assessments in decontextualised settings. This approach, however, does raise questions about the authenticity of the writing tasks undertaken within schools, and the extent to which writing itself can become 'schooled'.

3.4.2.4 Socio-political Discourse

The socio-political discourse is closely related to the social practices discourse, in which the emphasis is on the context of writing; however, in this case the discourse considers the political aspects of writing as well. Social forces and the relations of power are seen as proponents which shape writing (Ivanic, 2004). Both discourses which have different ways to represent the world, and genres which emphasise particular types of social context are involved in this view. The socio-political discourse of writing depends on the belief that more powerful social groups in any context dictate the discursual and generic resources which are used by writers. It argues that writers are constrained by their own social context, and Ivanic points out that young writers "choose how to represent the world, how to represent themselves, what social role to take, and how to address their readers when they write, but these are to some extent determined by the socio-political context in which they are writing" (Ivanic, 2004, p. 238).

According to Dyson (2002), children become writers by experiencing different social and cultural practices, and as a result they think of writing in a variety of different ways. As young writers grow up, they become responsible for different things in time, they improve their control of their skills, and they interpret life in different ways. Therefore, in the socio-political discourse, it is important for writing instruction to support the differences of children. Also, the dialogue between the student, teacher and others out of school holds an important place in teaching children how to write. It encourages students to monitor their own strategies for writing, as well as improving the learning process (McCarthy, 1994). Teachers can use real-life examples in the classroom when teaching writing, to allow children to create connections with their own lives which might facilitate their learning.

Ivanic's (2004) discourses on learning to write discuss teaching writing in early years classrooms, in which the textual aspects of writing cannot be abstracted from the

cognitive and mental processes that individuals experience, and the socio-cultural contexts from which written communication arises. In schools, interactions between the teacher and students are crucial in supporting children, and they occupy an importance place in the learning of writing.

3.4.3 The Role of the Teacher

The discourses outlined above can be seen reflected in policy and practice in the writing classroom; however, teachers' skills and their theoretical knowledge are other factors influencing children's writing development. In order to support children adequately, teachers should have skilled knowledge of the complexity of the writing processes and the writing difficulties that children may experience, especially in the early years, as well as how to prevent these obstacles (Sandberg, et al., 2015). A reflective approach for the writing teacher, which refuses to adhere to only one method or learning system and extends far beyond it, also requires pedagogical skills alongside theoretical ones, such as respecting children as individuals and showing empathy towards them (Sandberg, et al., 2015).

There is considerable evidence that the relation between teacher practice and student outcomes is mainly influenced by teachers' beliefs. Graham and Harris (2002, p. 147) point out that "the beliefs that teachers hold mediate their perceptions, evaluations, and classroom actions and predict students' beliefs, behaviours, and performance". Teachers have particular theories or approaches in terms of how to teach writing or how it is learned, and generally they stick to their viewpoints when teaching within the classroom. Also, teachers' self-efficacy or self-confidence with regards to their teaching skills are directly linked to the implementation of classroom practices, the quality of writing instruction, and students' motivation, as well as their achievements in writing (Graham & Harris, 2002).

When children are given choices and a variety of opportunities through exposing them to new ideas, children's awareness of their worlds can be observed to increase. According to Kissel (2008), re-envisioning in writing, in which children remember their previous writing and then add new information to familiar writing themes, can be seen as an efficient way to know more about children and their different ways of comprehension, to understand them better in order to support their writing development, and to glimpse their visions of the future.

Teachers have a variety of tools and options which they can apply in the classroom to support children. For example, in a study conducted by Van Ness et al. in a kindergarten (2013), a writing program was developed which involves three stages: planning, a whole-group lesson, and an individual writing session. Scaffolding can be seen in this study as a complementary task to help students, and after students have completed the task independently, the teacher removes the scaffolds. With this kind of instruction, the researcher illustrates that kindergartners, with the right support, can take up the role of writer, and this research highlights the role of the teacher in young children's writing development. Duke et al. (2007) found in their study involving second graders that teachers' tendency to use more authentic literacy activities in the classroom has an effect on students' comprehension and writing. Also, according to Dyson (2002), regular opportunities for children to consider themselves as writers and express themselves on paper, with a shift of priorities from correct spelling and the mechanics of handwriting to reflective writing, can aid students to learn writing with purpose. Therefore, teachers have an important role to play in terms of organising classroom activities in order to facilitate the writing process, and to make children feel comfortable with writing. The balance between teaching children how to write themselves and them asking for help is another important aspect of teachers' positions in the writing classroom (NAEYC, 1998).

In recent years, there has been a great improvement in the professional development of teachers in terms of how to teach writing in order to build instructional capacity in education (Applebee & Langer, 2009). From one-shot in-service programmes through longer-term engagements, this can be seen as a development in the writing curriculum and instruction to support teachers before they start working in schools.

3.4.4 Good Early Years Practice

In early years education, there are five key teaching strategies which form one approach to the teaching of early years writing: modelled, shared, interactive, guided and independent writing (Davis, 2013). These approaches allow educators and teachers to support young writers through modelling writing strategies, modelling the thinking process with think-aloud activities, sharing their writing experiences with other students in the classroom and their teachers, guiding students in applying different writing strategies, and providing opportunities to children for independent writing.

When using one of the approaches mentioned above, a teacher can embed a number of planned opportunities for young writers to improve their writing skills. Students who are introduced to new strategies and skills often require more teacher support. Students begin to feel confidence and move towards working independently in time, as the teacher models the strategies and the students put them into practice. In the following section, I will discuss modelled, shared, guided, independent and interactive writing approaches in the teaching of writing, in order to understand the classroom practice.

3.4.4.1 Modelled Writing

In modelled writing, the teacher shows a specific aspect of writing, which can range from a new writing skill, genre or a different form of text to a new format in the classroom. The text which is demonstrated in the classroom is generally related to an experience with which the students are familiar, which might facilitate them forming a relationship with the content of the writing. Thus, students can link their new learning with their prior knowledge. The teacher supports young writers by thinking aloud and modelling how a proficient writer acts; therefore, he or she puts thoughts and feelings into the process of writing. Modelling writing allows students to observe the writing process and to understand that even good writers can make mistakes; so, all work can be revised and/or edited if they want to change any part of it. Teachers usually display the finished products at eye level to enable the children to read and reread the text.

3.4.4.2 Shared Writing

Shared writing enables a study environment in which students and teachers can work together on a piece of writing. A collaboration between students and the teacher might be seen in this approach to creating text, and the teacher is usually the scribe. The text produced is available to students during the lesson, so the students have the opportunity to read it over and over, and they can model it for their own writing. Teachers can create small or large groups in a classroom setting in order to teach students how to write using the shared approach.

In teaching the shared writing approach, the teacher first chooses a form for the writing and specifies the purpose. Then, he or she plans the different ways to involve students in the writing process. After introducing the writing activity to young writers, the

students and the teacher share their opinions on writing, and then they compose; the teacher scribes and composes. Finally, after forming the written product, the teacher and students read it together.

3.4.4.3 Guided Writing

As an instructional strategy, guided writing allows students in a small-group setting to review a recently taught writing skill, and to apply it independently. The teacher generally uses a guided writing lesson when he or she determines that a number of students could benefit from further teacher support following modelled, shared and/or interactive writing lessons. In this way, the teacher can support young writers in developing a particular writing skill. In order to learn or practice a writing skill, the guided writing group comes together. When the group develops an understanding of the skill, the teacher disbands it. Additionally, young writers have the opportunity to use writing frames or templates which might scaffold their knowledge of how to write and how to apply writing skills.

3.4.4.4 Independent Writing

In this strategy of teaching how to write, students are given opportunities to select and assign topics and forms, which allows them to do their own writing. Writing independently can help students with taking risks, the development of fluency, thinking creatively and critically, finding solutions to problems, expressing their own ideas, and enjoying their writing. Students can experience independent writing in a very structured workshop, or in less structured writing sprees.

The teacher can encourage students to engage in independent writing as a follow-up to a series of writing lessons, or students can write independently for a period of time, and they can choose the topic and form for their writing.

3.4.4.5 Interactive Writing

“Interactive writing is an instructional context in which a teacher shares a pen – literally and figuratively – with a group of children as they collaboratively compose and construct a written message. We want to help children learn how written language works so that they can become independent writers.” (McCarrier, et al., 2000, p. 4). It is an instructional approach which allows students and teachers to share the task of

scribing a message. This strategy is beneficial in terms of guiding and encouraging writers, including reluctant ones, to write independently. In order to make sure that students can revisit the written product as well as allowing them to use it as a model for their own writing, the end product is displayed in the classroom.

Considering all of these different teaching strategies, it is equally important to address the approach which takes place in the study context.

3.4.5 The Product-oriented Approach

It is important in the scope of this study to understand the product-oriented approach to the teaching of writing, which is the dominant approach in Turkey, especially in early years education. This approach addresses handwriting, orthography and, later, grammar. With a focus on syntactical structures, teachers are concerned with the correctness and form of the final product. According to Klimova (2014), this approach gives learners the opportunity to discover the structure of the given discourse with an emphasis on the linguistic features in writing and the organisation of ideas. However, this might lead to a problem, in that through this method of teaching the organisation of ideas might seem more important than the ideas themselves.

In product-oriented classrooms, young writers are expected to imitate, copy and transform the teacher-supplied models, with a focus on writing tasks (Sun & Feng, 2009). It is discussed in the literature that the feedback given by the teacher on the written product is based on the “grammatical and lexical errors and the writing tasks become decontextualized where the contexts and audience are neglected” (Palpanadan, et al., 2015, p. 791). Writing instruction is determined by the classroom teachers, and is offered to the students who have no opportunities to choose the topic (McCarthy & Ro, 2011).

3.4.6 Summary of Writing Instruction

Writing is an essential part of a literate life in education; therefore, teaching children how to write provides a solid foundation for them to become writers. There are a variety of approaches which can be applied in classroom practice. Based on Ivanić's (2004) discourses on the teaching of writing, I have discussed the different approaches as well as the different practices in this section. Writing instruction is necessary to support children's basic skills such as handwriting or spelling, as well as maintaining a balance between the time spent writing and teaching the knowledge, strategies and other skills

needed to write effectively. Thus, understanding how writing might be viewed in the classroom can expand the researcher's point of view, which is helpful for the context of a study involving early years classrooms.

3.5 CONCLUSION

From the evidence-based literature reviewed in this chapter, it is obvious that there is still a need to understand the nature of writing in the early years classroom, how it develops over the years, and how it is understood and supported by teachers. Writing development is a complex process, and it is difficult to prescribe and define in order to create a shared understanding amongst all writers, from the youngest to the most competent ones. In a study conducted by Gerde and Bingham (2012, cited in Gerde et al., 2012), it was found that "writing was not only an underrepresented activity in pre-school classrooms, in some instances, writing was non-existent" (p.351). Even though there are writing theories that explain how it develops psychologically and cognitively, they ignore other facts about writing, such as the socio-cultural factors or the structure of different languages. In this respect, writing should be understood in its own social and cultural context, which leads to a different interpretation of the different writing processes, putting writing into a subjective and intersubjective place (Beck, 2006). Again, these understandings make writing development a complex and multi-factored process, which is relatively under-researched and under-theorised (Troia, 2007). It is also difficult to explore the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices and their influence on children's writing development in the transition process from the pre-school to the primary school setting, and this has been investigated with relatively less focus than reading development (National Commission on Writing, 2003).

Although it is important to research writing in schools (De Smedt & Van Keer, 2014), relatively little attention has been paid to writing instruction in the early years. In relation to research on teaching, McCarthy and Mkhize (2013, p. 2) emphasise that "teachers play the key role in implementing standards, tests, and curriculum as they attempt to prepare students for a rapidly changing, global society". In other words, teachers' beliefs and understandings of writing development might affect their classroom practices (Gaitas & Martins, 2015). In this regard, this gives validity to a study exploring the private ways of knowing or understanding teachers' beliefs about early writing, and how their practices might highlight instructional practice; for instance,

how teachers can support children with or without their pre-school background, or what can be done to enhance communication between the different educational stages. In the current writing research, despite the significance of teachers' beliefs, there are only a small number of studies that have attempted to study teachers' beliefs, and the relation between these beliefs and specific writing teaching practices (Gaitas & Martins, 2015).

There is recognition that emergent writing practices are crucial in supporting young writers; however, how children respond to the classroom practices which "shape their textual and developmental possibilities as communicators" remains under-researched (Christianakis, 2011, p. 23). Teachers' support in learning how to write helps children "to understand how the writing process works. With supportive teachers, children make greater progress in learning to write" (Mayer, 2007, p. 36). Given that pre-school and the first year of primary school classrooms are a relatively under-researched setting in the field of writing development, the aim of my study is to explore the relationship between teachers' beliefs about early writing development and classroom culture and practices, in both pre-school and the first year of primary education, and how these classroom cultures and practices impact children's writing behaviour.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the research methodology of the study by presenting the conceptual framework.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to explain the relationship between the ontological, epistemological and methodological approaches within the study, and how they are placed within an interpretive research paradigm. In this chapter, I will discuss and justify the methodological considerations and decisions taken in the design of a study aimed at understanding how early writing development is supported and understood in Turkish pre-school and primary school settings, how teachers shape writing pedagogy, as well as how this impacts the continuity from pre-school to primary school education. In order to answer the research question better in terms of exploring early writing development in two different settings – pre-school and primary school – the intention is to provide an in depth understanding of this particular context in Turkey, rather than looking for more generalised explanations.

This chapter begins with an outlining of the research context, and continues with a discussion of the informing paradigm and the underlying theoretical assumptions, as well as detailing the intended research methodology. The context in which the research is conducted, the design of the study, and the methods used in the collection of data are presented, before defending the study's credibility and sensitivity by highlighting the ethical boundaries of the study, which is appropriate especially when working with young writers and their teachers. The details of the analysis process will be explained and discussed, and then the final sections will outline the limitations and strengths of the study, leading to the justification of the proposed design as an appropriate methodology for data inquiry, given the aims of the research.

4.2 RESEARCH CONTEXT

4.2.1 Setting and Participants

The research setting consists of three primary schools, including pre-school classrooms, in Kayseri, a city in the middle of Turkey. Neither the schools nor the classrooms were chosen by me; they were determined by the Ministry of National Education. In the beginning, I had planned to conduct the research in five schools; however, in two of the schools proposed by the Ministry, the pre-school classrooms had been separated from the primary schools. In other words, my aim in this study is to follow children from one context to the next, but the proposed pre-schools did not accommodate this intention. Therefore, I reduced the number of schools to three,

located in different areas in the city, which still allowed me to follow children through the transition, and to understand the different classroom practices that might exist as a consequence of the social locations of the schools. The classrooms were allocated to me by the school director following my explanations of how the research was going to be completed and what was needed, but this was also based on the willingness of the classroom teachers. I had already obtained approval from the Ministry of National Education in Turkey to carry out my research in these primary school settings (Appendix 1.a). Balancing the approval of the Ministry with the ethical requirements for participants to be willing volunteers will be discussed in the section on ethics.

The participants were students from three pre-school classrooms (four students from each classroom) and their teachers. An additional eight teachers from the same schools took part in the focus group interview (Table 4.1). In the classrooms, there were a few students who came from other countries and had Turkish as their second language; therefore, they required assistance in this language. Several children had some emotional difficulties related to their home situations. The range of the writing ability in the classrooms varied based on the setting (pre-school or primary school) and the size of the classrooms, and some children had more difficulties than others coping with the writing tasks. In analysing the data, the observation data will be used in order to paint a clear picture of the different settings, and so a more detailed portrayal of the classrooms will be outlined in the findings chapter.

PHASE 1 (PRE-SCHOOL CLASSROOM)				
	School A	School B	School C	Total
Teacher	1	1	1	3
Focus Student	4	4	4	12
PHASE 2 (PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM)				
	School A	School B	School C	Total
Teacher	1	1	1	3
Focus student from pre- school	4	4	4	12

Tablo 4. 1: The distribution of teachers in schools for observations and interviews

It is important to frame the context in which the study took place. Thus, in the following section, I will summarise the general features of the schools featured in this research. *School A* is located in an inner-city area with high levels of social deprivation, and children with Turkish as an additional language. The cultural background of the children is, in general, traditional, Islamic, low-income families. Approximately 800 students enrol with this school each year, and there are 25 classrooms.

School B is also located in an inner-city area with better facilities than the other schools, such as transportation to almost everywhere in the city, an assistant for each pre-school classroom teacher, a different entrance for the pre-school classrooms, sports facilities, a conference saloon, a large library, computers for each classroom, and a science lab, and it has about 1,500 students. Again, there are children who have Turkish as an additional language. The cultural background of the children is more modern, by which I mean secular and more progressive in the context of this research, high-income families. More experienced teachers work in this school.

School C is located in an outer-city area with a level of social deprivation. The cultural background of the children is traditional, which in this context refers to conservative, faith-based, mid-income families. Approximately 2,000 students enrol with this school each year, and there are 26 classrooms in the school. There is a library and a conference room in this school, and there are computers in each classroom.

4.2.2 Aims and Objectives

The aim of this research is to understand how early writing development is supported and understood in the pre-school and primary school settings, how teachers shape their writing pedagogy, and how this impacts the continuity from pre-school to primary school education. While past research has considered the nature of writing development in specific contexts, few studies have looked at the continuity between pre-school and primary school phases with a view to understanding early writing development. Research has also focused on how students understand writing and how it is supported by their teachers in their classroom practices. The early years are crucial for young writers to develop their writing skills, as well as their understanding of what writing is and what it is for, which together enables them to become competent writers in time; however, understanding writing development in the transition from pre-school to early primary school education, and the possible impact of different pedagogical approaches, is relatively under-researched, and this is particularly true of very young writers. By focusing on the classroom practices of four to seven year old students and their teachers, the aim of this research is to advance the understanding of how writing is supported in these two settings (pre-school and primary school), and the underlying constructs that shape these two contexts. The aim is to contribute to the theory and practice in the domain of writing development, which has implications for the later academic success of students.

4.2.3 Research Questions

The main questions are related to the research objectives.

In the context of the Turkish early years writing classroom:

1. What is the relationship between teachers' beliefs about early writing development and classroom culture and practices, in both pre-school and the first year of primary education?
2. How do these classroom cultures and practices impact children's writing behaviour?

The following questions are more focused, and are derived from the main questions:

1. Do pre-school and primary school teachers differ in their views on early writing skills?

2. How are teaching practices in the two settings similar or different? Do pre-school and primary teachers engage in different classroom practices in relation to early writing skills?
3. How do teachers perceive the role of the two settings in relation to early writing development?
4. How do pre-school and primary teachers value pre-school experiences in the development of early writing skills?
5. Is there continuity between the two phases (pre-school and primary school)?
6. Are primary school teachers aware of what happens in pre-school settings, and do they build on it?
7. How will the children who I will follow from pre-school to primary school respond to the different settings?

These questions have been addressed through semi-structured interviews with teachers, observations in both pre-school and primary school settings, a focus group interview with both pre-school and primary school teachers, lesson plans of teachers which demonstrate how they teach writing in classrooms, writing samples from the children, and photographs of how their work is displayed or viewed by others.

These questions have been investigated in three phases. In the first and second phases of the study, data was collected from the three pre-schools and primary classrooms through detailed observations of the writing pedagogy and practices, as well as through semi-structured interviews with teachers. Writing samples and lesson plans were collected in these two phases. In the last phase, a focus group interview was conducted with both groups of teachers (pre-school and primary school), in order to learn what they think about each other's practices and beliefs.

4.3 RESEARCH PARADIGMS AND THEORETICAL ASSUMPTIONS

According to Creswell (2012), research, which involves asking questions, data collection and analysis of data, helps educators understand problems or issues by accumulating knowledge. It can also assist researchers and educators in improving

their practices by allowing them to discuss and debate important policy issues. In order to investigate, explore or understand an inquiry, there are different approaches, which are referred to as research paradigms by the research literature, in the discourse of educational research. Different research paradigms are informed by different world views and different philosophical assumptions, and they serve different purposes and address different kinds of research questions; different kinds of questions require different kinds of research (Pring, 2015).

Research paradigms have been represented by scholars as being informed by two different underlying beliefs and foundational assumptions. According to Cohen et al. (2000), these two research paradigms consist of different conceptions of the nature of reality, and they reflect the two main views in social sciences: the scientific or positivist view, and the interpretive view. The two main theoretical and philosophical stances are outlined under these two research paradigms, which influence researchers when making decisions about their chosen methodology. This research is informed by the interpretive paradigm, and the underpinning epistemological and ontological assumptions of this paradigm will be discussed in the following section.

4.3.1 Informing Paradigm

As a researcher, I understand reality to be informed by the complexities of meaning-construction in a socio-cultural context. On the one hand, teaching is a complex activity which poses difficulties both intellectually and emotionally, requiring knowledge of the subject being taught, knowledge of the curriculum, teaching skills, learning strategies, and knowledge of the learners' interests and abilities. It is also influenced by the education, both formal and informal, that a teacher has received, and the beliefs and values shaped by this experience. On the other hand, writing is also a highly complex activity, especially for young writers. Students need to build relations between their knowledge of the topic, the purpose of writing and their audience, as well as making structural, presentational and linguistic choices which constitute the meaning across the text. Specific rhetorical purposes are achieved through the manipulation of sentences and vocabulary. Apart from the cognitive and linguistic issues related to writing, it is also a social and cultural activity which is shaped in the classroom through the relationships between students and teachers. In other words, writing development in the early years might depend on a variety of factors, such as individual cognitive development, or on the practices of the teacher in the classroom in terms of how to

teach writing, just as much as on the linguistic knowledge being taught in the classroom.

The methodological position of this study is framed within an interpretivist paradigm, and is based on the premise that children and teachers interact with each other and respond to the domains of school in a variety of ways, which are shaped by the expectations of those specific cultures (Street, 1984). According to Silverman (2013), making the researcher's epistemological stance transparent by clarifying what is understood by the nature and status of knowledge is central to any methodological approach. Thus, the nature of the human condition, which is the focus of this study, makes the research intentionally interpretive, as the aim is to understand the early writing development of children as writers, and how teachers shape and support it in the classroom environment.

Therefore, an interpretive approach employing largely qualitative data was chosen to meet the complex nature of the research focus. The data collection includes: observations in the schools, interviews with teachers, written samples from the young writers, photographs of the children's works, video recordings, and lesson plans. A researcher being informed by a positivist paradigm would mean that the subject of the research might be viewed as the discovery of objective facts (Holliday, 2007); facts that have an existence that is external to the individual constructions of the researcher. However, the chosen interpretivist approach enables the researcher to watch, listen, ask, record and examine data, as well as valuing his or her role in the research (Schwandt, 1994). This approach to research explains why interpretivist research is likely to involve the collection of qualitative data to represent the assumed subjective nature of reality, rather than quantitative data to measure and fix an objective reality.

In a qualitative study within the interpretive paradigm, there is an assumption of multiple realities when studying individuals (Creswell, 2013). "The evidence of multiple realities includes the use of multiple forms of evidence in themes using the actual words of different individuals and presenting different perspectives." (Creswell, 2013, p. 20). The epistemological assumption implicit in this paradigm is that knowledge is always a human construction. In other words, knowledge is known through the subjective experiences of people: people create and associate their own meanings through their interactions with the world. Therefore, interpretive research attempts to understand phenomena through the participants who create their own meanings of a

subject, and this approach attempts to minimise the distance or objective separateness between the researcher and those being researched (Guba & Lincoln, 1988). Interpretive research does not include a hypothesis which will be tested throughout the study; instead, it focuses on the participants' understandings of the issue or the problem, not on the researcher's problems, which are brought from the literature (Creswell, 2013). As a result of this theoretical assumption, the research process is viewed to be emergent with findings being informed by the qualitative nature of the study, rather than existing meanings being prescribed or imposed upon the data. According to Creswell (2013), all researchers bring their own values and interpretations to a study; however, qualitative researchers make these values and interpretations known in their research, which is known as the "axiological" assumption. As a qualitative researcher, I have brought my own subjective interpretations to this study in order to comprehend writing development in the early years. By positioning myself as the interpreter of the data from the study, it is important to acknowledge that these interpretations are inevitably shaped by my own background and history as a pre-school teacher with my own prior understandings. The aim in emphasising this position is not to deny the influence coming from the presence of the researcher in the study, but to acknowledge it through reflexive analysis.

Johnson and Christensen (2014, p. 421) state that individuals are born into social and cultural structures which have a strong influence on what they become or how they view things as real, important or good. According to socio-culturalism, individuals become a part of the larger social and cultural world which linguistic structures provide; so, they follow the norms and practices in this world through socialisation and interactions with other people in their daily lives (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Thus, it is an important feature in this research that the students and teachers are living in a social context which will both shape and be shaped by the individuals themselves; thus, in this research, their subjective perceptions are taken into consideration.

The knowledge with which an individual engages is recognised to be entrenched in a larger process, which might be defined as cultural, social and political. Therefore, this research investigates the continuum between pre-school and primary school education, and the influence this has on writing skills and how these skills are supported in these two settings through what is constructed in the Turkish national

curriculum, which has been adopted in order to propose the way that teachers and schools might support and improve writing development in the early years. For instance, in the first and second phases of the study, I collected the lesson plans of teachers which had been prepared through their individual consideration of the national curriculum. Through analysing these plans, I intended to understand the teachers' practices and their teaching aims. I was mindful of the fact that teachers' decisions and practices are influenced by the social and political context in which they take place, a context which might change in time rather than being a fixed entity. I also expected that even though these teachers worked within the same national curriculum, their implementation of it would vary according to their own subjective beliefs, strengths, weaknesses and previous professional experience.

Interpretive research assumes that the meanings produced in or from research reflect the situated nature of judgements (Hammersley, 2007). According to Guba (1990, p. 25), "No unequivocal explanation is ever possible. There can be many constructions, and there is no foundational way to choose them." Therefore, I defend the approach that seeks to understand how any generalisable truth is realised in a particular context. In addition, this study can enlighten teachers' views and practices related to early writing development.

The decisions made in terms of the research design have been influenced by my views of social reality and the nature of meaning, as discussed above. A model or a framework which looks at social reality is important when underpinning these decisions (Creswell, 2012). Through repeatedly moving between the interdependent meaning of parts in a whole context and the complex whole which these parts form, understanding can be achieved (Klein & Myers, 1999). According to Guba and Lincoln (1988), the investigator or the researcher has a basic belief system or worldview which guides them in choosing which method to use, as well as in ontologically and epistemologically fundamental ways.

In this study, the first assumption guiding my worldview is the construction of social reality, which values human actors within different ways in different contexts. Thus, I cannot assume any single or simple way of exploring the phenomenon which is the focus of this research; it is designed to be heterogenetic, which allows the researcher to investigate the phenomenon from a variety of different angles and perspectives. The second assumption is that the social context in which the study takes place is

comprised of the classroom and school environment and also its wider social, cultural and political sphere, all of which affect people's beliefs and actions. Therefore, early writing development is positioned as a deeply social act, developed through the interactions of students, teachers and others in their daily lives, which influences teachers' and students' decisions and judgements through sharing their experiences and discussions within a larger social world. It is not only restricted to participants' interactions, but also includes my interactions with the pre-school and primary school teachers and the students, as well as depending on my background as a pre-school teacher. Therefore, the natural setting of the classroom is important in this research in order to explore the teachers' views, beliefs and their practices in the classroom, as well as following the children from pre-school through to primary school education. The use of certain research methods (e.g. observations and semi-structured interviews) placed me in an insider role as an observer, involved in dialogue with teachers about their practices and children in their break time, in order to explore different perspectives and shared meanings, as well as to understand deeper thoughts.

The main principle of the interpretive paradigm is that it is co-constructed and situated, and explores any individual's partial understanding of the truth; thus, it is not possible to talk about any objective or value-free interpretation in research. As the aim of this study was to understand the phenomenon of early writing development through the interpretation of participants' understandings, alongside the construction of multiple understandings of the data coming from the research, it was essential to draw meanings inductively, instead of utilising pre-formed hypotheses. Therefore, the teachers and children were not removed from their natural environment nor encouraged to engage in anything other than their normal practices, and the teachers were asked to explain how they perceive and understand the needs of young writers in their own words through semi-structured interviews and a focus group interview, as well as during discussions after each writing lesson. As Marshall and Rossman (2016) state, it is the responsibility of the researcher to look into and document a number of viewpoints and voices, which leads him or her to analyse participants' opposing views and conflicting interpretations in order to create an opportunity to revise any preconceptions.

The recognition of both the importance and the difficulty of studying judgement-making processes in naturalistic settings is substantial for this research. Understanding classroom interactions requires me to comprehend the cognition of the teachers and students, and how they carry their thoughts and beliefs into actions. Teachers' reactions in the classroom environment are sharpened by their personal thoughts, judgements and decisions; they can even make reasonable judgements when facing unexpected situations and environments, with the intention of optimising student outcomes. On the other hand, it is difficult for a researcher to understand the judgement process of teachers. Therefore, I spoke with teachers after they had finished any writing activities in the classroom when collecting data, in order to understand what they think about the writing skills of students, how they understand the needs of children in the early years, and how they support them through the opportunities they create. The aim was to use multiple methods of data collection in order to construct a complex picture of the two contexts.

4.4. DESIGN

4.4.1 Research Design and Process

Method	Sample size	Purpose
Observations	Three pre-schools (June). Three primary schools (Sept).	To observe in close detail the writing pedagogy and practices in each setting. The same children will be observed first in a pre-school setting then later, following transition, in a primary setting.
Semi-structured interviews	Three pre-schools (June). Three primary schools (Sept).	To explore the beliefs and opinions of teachers from each setting.
Writing samples	From both pre-schools and primary schools	To understand what children do to improve their writing in both the pre-school and primary school setting.
Lesson plans	Three pre-school teachers. Three primary school teachers.	To understand teachers' practices and teaching aims.
Focus groups	Four pre-schools. Four primary schools (December).	To enable both groups of teachers to interact with each other in order to learn what they think about each other's practices, and what kind of solutions they can offer.

Tablo 4. 2: The embedded design of the study

A design for a qualitative study informed by an interpretive approach to research (see Table 4.2) needs to be flexible enough to enable pertinent changes to be made to its design, in order to accommodate important developments which might arise before or during the process of data collection. In other words, "The initial plan for research cannot be tightly prescribed, and... all phases of the process may change or shift after the researchers enter the field and begin to collect data." (Creswell, 2013, p. 47).

Therefore, it was necessary for this study that I balanced the advantage of a flexible design responsive to emerging circumstances with the need to ensure that I collected data rigorously and systematically at certain points throughout the research. The appropriate research instruments were determined prior to the fieldwork, with their precise content to be decided after trialling and even progressed when possible during the study. The fine tuning of data collection decisions, such as the need to reduce the number of schools included in the research design from five to three, was done at the beginning of the study, as two of the primary schools did not involve any pre-school classrooms. Also, I had to adjust the timeline that was planned prior to the study, based on the availability of teachers, official holidays, and any activities taking place in the schools.

A multi-method approach to the design of this interpretive study was adopted on the grounds that it can best explore the issues raised in the research questions, and is capable of providing insightful and reliable information. A frequent justification for the multi-method approach is looking at a research problem from more than one standpoint (Silverman, 2013). The aim is to confirm one data set through similar findings from another, and to have a better understanding of the context. According to Silverman (2013, p. 122), "Multiple methods are often adopted in the mistaken hope that they will reveal 'the whole picture'. But this 'whole picture' is an illusion which speedily leads to scrappy research based on under-analysed data and an imprecise or theoretically indigestible research problem". My aim was not to validate the findings which came from one research method through the findings that I found using other methods and thus propose notional 'right answers'. Nor did I aim to reveal 'the whole picture' through collecting data via multiple methods. Instead, through the use of different methods in the study pertinent to my research aims, and by developing a broader and more informed understanding of the study context, the aim was to synthesise findings from different spectrums. In this qualitative research design, utilising multiple methods was underpinned by the same assumptions that underpin the interpretive approach itself. The assumption is that multiple aspects of the experience can surface and a deeper understanding can be achieved by examining the experience through a variety of prisms afforded by each data set, collected through different instruments. Therefore, this research would contribute to the field, to enlighten early writing development in pre-school and primary school settings by

offering an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon through a detailed exploration of how different teachers and different children negotiate the complex context that shapes writing development.

Adhering to the principles of a qualitative methodology and the interpretive paradigm, and aiming at a detailed understanding of the research context, each one of the research questions guiding this study was addressed. More specifically, the questions related to teachers' views and their practices as well as their beliefs were examined through semi-structured interviews, observations, a focus group interview and lesson plans. The questions regarding the children's responses to the different settings were examined through observations, children's writing samples, video recordings of the writing activities, and photographs of their works. The methods and sequence of data collection used in the whole research are shown in Table 4.3. The relevance of each method is then discussed in the sections that follow.

The design of the present study was based on the premise that the early writing skills supported in pre-school education should influence teaching how to write in primary school education, through a greater emphasis on stimulating activities and enhancing children's writing development. My own experience had led me to conclude that the primary setting in Turkey was more product-driven than the pre-school setting, which was more child-centred. One aim of the study was to explore if this was so, and how this impacted both the teachers and the children within these two settings. To make this research possible, and to ensure the internal validity of the study and with the ethical aspect in mind, I had to take into account the following considerations.

<i>Dataset</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Dates</i>
Pre-school Context			
Observation	Teachers; focus children	10	18 May – 10 June 2015
Interview	Teachers	3	June 2015
Writing samples	Focus children	12 children 214 samples	18 May – 10 June 2015
Lesson plans	Teachers	3	18 May – 10 June 2015
Primary School Context			
Observation	Teachers; focus children	12	07 Oct – 06 Nov 2015
Interview	Teachers	3	November 2015
Writing samples	Focus children	12 children 298 samples	07 Oct – 06 Nov 2015
Lesson plans	Teachers	3	07 Oct – 06 Nov 2015
Pre-school and Primary School			
Focus group interview	Pre-school and primary teachers	8 teachers 1 session	December 2015

Tablo 4. 3: Data Collection – Chronology Table

First of all, I had to ensure that the scope of the research would be within the normal class curriculum and regular timetable, not influencing the classroom practice at all. I wished to work constructively with these teachers who were willing to take part in the research, and thus I had to work within the constraints of the curriculum, time and space. This was important for the research, as it took weeks, and I had to be in contact with the teachers through all of those weeks as well as conducting semi-structured interviews with them. Also, I hoped that those pre-school and primary school teachers would eventually benefit from the research findings, in part from being informed of any

findings, but also from having the opportunity to discuss their own practices with me and with each other. Secondly, as I was a novice researcher, I needed to reassure myself that I had chosen the methods to be used in the classrooms to collect data based on well-informed decisions. For this reason, I worked closely with my supervisors, who are prominent writing researchers, and they helped me to design my research. Finally, for the design of my research, I needed to take into account the needs of the teachers and adjust the dates and times accordingly, to relieve the teachers and to be involved in the classrooms during writing activities without causing any disruption.

4.4.2 Selection Procedures for the Focus Children

The rationale behind the selection of four students in each pre-school classroom was that I intended to follow these children from the pre-school setting to the primary one. In this way, I was able to observe and focus on these children as well as observing the whole classroom and their activities related to writing. Also, it enabled me to minimise the data collected through observations, video recordings, photographs and work, from all of the children to four children in each classroom. My intention was to gain a deeper insight into how early writing is supported in classrooms and how individual children might react in different settings. In the process of choosing the focus children, I talked with teachers, parents or legal guardians and school directors, to ensure that these children would continue in the same primary school and in the same classroom, so that I would be able to follow them in the next setting. The gender of the children, their family income and any other such factors had no influence on their selection. The ethical issue of informed consent will be discussed later in the chapter in a different section.

4.4.3 Timeline of the Study

In the Turkish curriculum, the allocated time for any writing sessions in pre-school is two to three hours weekly, and in primary school education it is 11 hours a week (MoNE, 2012). In the first design of the research, five schools were supposed to have been included in the study. The names of the schools were given by the Ministry of National Education. However, two schools (which were determined by the Ministry) were removed from the study, as the teachers in one of them had finished doing activities and had begun to prepare for the year end show. Also, in the other school,

the teachers had planned to spend the last month visiting places such as museums, zoos and gardens. Therefore I had to eliminate this school as well, because it was not going to be possible to observe any writing activities. Although I visited other schools with a view to involving them in the study, I did not have enough time and could not find another school which suited the goals of this study. Thus, I decided to continue the study with three primary schools, each of which includes a pre-school classroom. At the beginning of the research (in the first phase), I began with observations in the three pre-school classrooms for three to four weeks at the end of the 2014/2015 academic year (from the 18th of May until the 10th of June). I went to the schools once a week and observed four children in each classroom, as well as observing the whole classroom during reading and writing sessions, and took notes on their writing behaviours, engagement with the tasks, classroom practices and the teaching methods (see Table 4.4). By choosing to focus my observation on the behaviour of four individual children, I was able manage the observation process to ensure greater detail from a smaller number of children (four children x three pre-school classrooms x four weeks).

		Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
	11th May – 15th May	18th May – 22th May	25th May – 29th May	1st June – 5th June	8th June – 12th June
Monday	X	School A	X	School C	X
Tuesday	X	X	School C	School B	X
Wednesday	X	X	School B	School A	School C
Thursday	X	School B	School A	X	X
Friday	X	School C	X	X	X
					Interviews

Tablo 4. 4: Observations in pre-school classrooms

I talked with the teachers before and after the writing lessons, and asked them to provide me with their assessments of the children's writing and their views on the children's writing development. I also conducted semi-structured interviews with these

teachers at the end of the term to explore their beliefs and opinions in terms of early writing.

In the second phase of the study within the primary education setting, I followed the same students from each pre-school classroom during the first four weeks of their primary school education in the 2015/2016 academic year (from the 7th of October until the 6th of November). The beginning date in the research design was delayed because of governmental issues and a religious holiday in Turkey. Therefore, schools were opened on the 28th of September. Informing the directors of the schools, the primary school teachers and the parents at the beginning of the study took a long time, and I was only able to observe the classrooms from the second week of term onwards, although I had planned to begin in the first week. I planned to go to the classrooms on different days to see different writing activities as part of their normal classroom practices. However, this was not convenient for the teachers, and I had to arrange a new time line with them. Occasionally, there were some emergent things that happened in the classrooms which affected the dates of the observations (see Table 4.5). Also, there was Republic Day on the 29th of October, and on the same weekend there were elections in the country. Thus there was a total of six days of holiday in formal institutions. The schools opened again on the 3rd of November, when I returned to complete my observations in schools A and C.

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
	5th Oct – 9th Oct	12th Oct – 16th Oct	19th Oct – 23th Oct	26th Oct – 30th Oct	2nd Nov – 6th Nov
Monday		School A			HOLIDAY
Tuesday		School B	School C	School B	
Wednesday	School A	School C	School A	HOLIDAY	School A
Thursday	School B		School B	HOLIDAY	
Friday	School C			HOLIDAY	School C
					Interviews

Tablo 4. 5: Observations in the primary school classrooms

After finishing the observations in the primary school classrooms, I conducted semi-structured interviews with the teachers involved in the study in the last week. It took 30 to 45 minutes to complete each interview with the teachers, similar to in the pre-school phase.

4.5 DATA COLLECTION

An important step in the data collection process is having sufficient data from which to construct a complex picture of a particular context. This was achieved in this study through a multiple-methods design in order to gain a more comprehensive view. By acquiring data through converging methods, such as observations, semi-structured interviews and text analysis, I aimed to capture the multiple dimensions of the writing process as experienced by these very young writers, being mindful of the cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic aspects of this experience. Each of the qualitative data collection methods used in this study can be seen as complementary and generating different insights, yet each contributes to a larger picture. In addition, different kinds of data can shed light on each other. The data tools in this study were cross-referenced to the research questions (see Table 4.6), in order to ensure that the chosen methods remained focused and appropriate to the study.

The chosen data collection methods were as follows: observations (field notes and video recordings), semi-structured interviews (with both pre-school and primary school teachers), a focus group interview, writing samples from the focus children (photographs of their writings), and lesson plans of the teachers, which had been used throughout the year. The rationale for the choice of methods used in this research is outlined in the following sections.

<i>Understanding how early writing development is supported and understood in the pre-school and primary school settings, how teachers shape writing pedagogy, and how this impacts the continuity from pre-school to primary school education</i>					
RQ1	What is the relationship between teachers' beliefs about early writing development and classroom culture and practices, in both pre-school and the first year of primary education?				
RQ2	How do classroom culture and practices impact children's writing behaviour?				
Question	Data Tools				
	Observation	Interviews	Focus Group	Writing Samples	Lesson Plans
RQ1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>
RQ2	<input type="checkbox"/>			<input type="checkbox"/>	

Tablo 4. 6: Data tools linked to research questions

4.5.1 Observations

Observations “entail the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviours, interactions and artefacts (objects) in the social setting” (Marshall & Rossman, 2016, p. 143). Observation, in this sense, is a typical method used in qualitative inquiries, because it allows a researcher to discover complex interactions in natural social settings.

School-based observations were undertaken in this research in order to observe children and teachers during their writing activities in the classroom, alongside interviews with the teachers. The affordances of situated observation followed by interviews include the opportunity to explore the reflections of teachers on school writing and writing pedagogy, and how they understand it through their own interpretation as both the actor and the commentator on their own actions. In other words, this approach allowed a follow-up conversation with the teachers about their classroom practices and the writing development of children that had been observed by the researcher. In addition, the aim of this approach is to reach a better understanding of the meanings behind participants' behaviours and actions. Thus, the

focus of this research is on exploring the associated meanings attached to writing events in the classroom.

The timeline of observations was agreed with the teachers when choosing which lessons would be observed, with the request that the observations should occur during the writing lessons. In the first (pre-school) phase, I observed classrooms once a week during writing activities, with a special focus on four particular children in each classroom. I continued to observe these same focus children from three classrooms in their first four weeks of primary education. An observation protocol was used in the lessons, which merely listed the activities used in the classroom, recorded how the focus children engaged in writing activities, and included the teachers' reflections on the purpose of the writing activities observed and their comments on the children's writing. The observation notes were then reproduced electronically (see the example provided in Appendix 3.a). I also used video recordings as a supplementary tool to the observation notes.

During observations, the role of 'observer and participant' was taken, as I was known to both the children and the teachers. This enabled me to discuss the issues that I had seen during the writing activities with the teachers after the lessons. The teachers were also aware that a follow-up interview would be conducted, during which they could reflect on their responses in relation to the observed writing activities that had taken place.

4.5.2 Semi-structured Interviews

Research interviews have been described as "a construction site of knowledge, where two (or more) individuals discuss a theme of mutual interest" (Kvale, 1996, p.2, cited in Marshall & Rossmann, 2016, p.147). Qualitative interviews are also called in-depth interviews, as it is possible to collect information about people's thoughts, beliefs, knowledge, reasoning, motivations and/or their feelings about a topic through interviews, which allows "a researcher to enter into the inner world of another person and to gain an understanding of that person's perspective" (Johnson & Christensen, 2014, p. 233). In addition, interviews are beneficial in allowing researchers to understand participants' interpretations of a situation from their own points of view, through enabling the establishment of trust and rapport between the researcher and the participants. In these senses, conducting an interview should be approached as an interpersonal encounter.

A key element of this research was to understand how pre-school and primary school teachers perceive and support early writing development through their classroom practices. Therefore, interviews were conducted with both groups of teachers in the form of an informal conversation. To facilitate this, two semi-structured interview protocols were created for both the pre-school and the primary school teachers who had been observed in phase one. The prompts were designed to acknowledge that the teachers are experts in their own experiences of how they support children on the way to becoming writers, and the questions were semi-structured to allow the participants to engage in free-flowing conversations. As the teachers were familiar with me and the research, it was not difficult to initiate conversations in a place chosen by the teachers. Within these interviews, the impact of early writing tasks on young writers were discussed with the teachers (see Appendix 2.a and Appendix 2.b), and these will be explained in the following section. Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main format, in which pre-prepared questions were used.

All of the interviews were professionally transcribed. Although it is possible to argue that this might create a gap between the researcher and the data, it was a deliberate decision to wait until the final written representation of the discussion was completed. This enabled me to review the whole dataset during the inductive thematic analysis, which was the chosen method for analysing the data.

4.5.3 Semi-structured Interview Questions

In this study, there were two different interviews for two different groups of teachers: pre-school and primary school teachers. Most of questions in these interviews were the same, and if not, they were similar. These questions were designed to represent the research questions (the relationship between the interview questions and the research questions is given in Appendix 2.d, question by question). I also tailored the questions based on my observations of the classroom practices of teachers. I had four guiding questions in each interview (see below), which served as the core questions that I could ask each teacher in several categories. I added some follow-up questions, which allowed me to develop and improvise around the leading questions during the interviews.

The first question, “Could you please tell me...”, was designed to understand the different activities undertaken by teachers in the classroom within the boundaries of

formal instruction. The subsequent questions were designed to elicit their personal evaluations of the writing skills of the children, what they were doing to support these skills, and what they think about the learning culture of the other institution. The questions used in the interviews are stated below, in the order in which they were asked:

1. Could you please tell me how writing is part of all of the different things you do in pre-school/primary school?
2. Could you please tell me which writing skills you think children learn in pre-school education?
3. Could you please tell me how you support children in the process of writing in pre-schools/primary schools?
4. Could you please tell me about the role of primary school/pre-school teachers in enhancing children' writing skills?

4.5.4 Focus Group Interview

According to Patton (1990), a focus group interview can be defined as an organised group interview which enables the researcher to collect and compare several perspectives on the same topic in a relatively small amount of time. The researcher selects the participants and assembles them to discuss a topic or issue based on their personal experiences (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Focus groups generally consist of a homogenous group, depending on the specific characteristics that the researcher needs (Patton, 1990).

<i>Phases 1 and 2: Observations and Semi-structured Interviews</i>			
	School A	School B	School C
Pre-school teachers	1	1	1
Primary school teachers	1	1	1
<i>Phase 3: Focus Group Interview</i>			
Pre-school teachers	1	1	2
Primary school teachers	1	1	2

Tablo 4. 7: Participants in phases 1, 2 and 3

There were eight teachers (four pre-school and four primary school teachers) in the focus group interview (see Appendix 2.c), which was conducted as the third phase of

the study, after the observations and semi-structured interviews had been completed. Participants were chosen from the three schools in which the study was undertaken (see Table 4.7). In preparing for the session, the major objectives of the meeting were identified, the participants were notified of the exact time and location that the interviewing would take place, and all of the materials which would be used to record the interview session were gathered. Through conducting a focus group interview with two different groups of teachers, I aimed to explore how early writing is understood in these two contexts.

I initially prepared contentious statements to use as a facilitating tool during the focus group interview, and to allow participants to discuss them. These statements included arguments about at what age children can start learning to write, comparisons between children who have pre-school experience and those who do not, and writing instruction in pre-school and primary school education. However, on the basis of the conversation between teachers, I asked various relevant questions whenever it was necessary to focus the participants' attention, as from time to time there were discussions which were irrelevant to the research subject.

In this focus group setting, I served as the facilitator. There were two different groups of teachers present – pre-school and primary school – which allowed me to gather different kinds of insight into how they think about each other's teaching context in terms of writing, the problems they face in each setting, and what they can offer to support children on their way to becoming writers. The research questions were correlated with the statements in the interview to ensure that the data collected through the focus group interview would yield findings which corresponded to the research questions (see Table 4.8).

Contentious Statements	Research Questions
The pre-school experience is important in terms of children becoming ready to write.	4. How do pre-school and primary teachers value pre-school experiences in the development of early writing skills? 6. Are primary school teachers aware of what happens in pre-school settings, and do they build on it?
The first year of primary school is a busy year in terms of teaching how to write.	3. How do teachers perceive the role of the two settings in relation to early writing development?
Writing support in pre-school and primary school should be very different from each other.	2. How are teaching practices in the two settings similar or different? Do pre-school and primary teachers engage in different classroom practices in relation to early writing skills?
In order to support young writers you need to be an expert in childhood development.	3. How do teachers perceive the role of the two settings in relation to early writing development?
Teaching writing is no different to teaching anything else.	1. Do pre-school and primary teachers differ in their views of early writing skills?
It is better to keep support for writing as informal and playful as possible for as long as possible.	4. How do pre-school and primary teachers value pre-school experiences in the development of early writing skills?
Children are pushed on too quickly in writing in primary school.	3. How do teachers perceive the role of the two settings in relation to early writing development?
What is taught in the pre-school phase is well supported in primary school.	5. Is there a continuity between the two phases (pre-school and primary school)? 6. Are primary school teachers aware of what happens in pre-school settings, and do they build on it?

Tablo 4. 8: Cross-referenced statements for focus group interview

4.5.5 Writing Samples

The aim of the collection and analysis of writing samples produced by the focus children was to answer the research sub-question, ‘How do the children who I will follow from pre-school to primary school respond to the different settings?’ This resulted in a large amount of data: a set of more than 500 writing samples, 214 samples from the pre-school phase (three weeks x four children x three schools) and 298 samples from the primary school phase (four weeks x four children x three schools). These writing samples were photographed after each writing activity had been observed in the classrooms. Different kinds of activities took place in the different educational settings (pre-school and primary school): drawing, scribbling, number writing, matching, name writing, letter writing, letter-sound relationships, beginning-ending letters, word writing, capitalisation, sentence construction and punctuation. Collecting the writing samples allowed me to follow the children from one setting to another, and through exploring this sample of written work I was able to understand further how they were becoming writers and how they responded to different writing activities.

4.5.6 Lesson Plans

In the Turkish educational system, teachers have to prepare lesson plans based on the Turkish Curriculum, which can range from daily, weekly or monthly plans to plans for a term or a year. In primary education, there are different lesson plans for different lessons (OECD, 2013). Collecting the lesson plans used during the academic year enabled me to understand how teachers support children in terms of writing development. Also, this allowed me to explore what is expected from teachers in terms of the writing achievement and progress of the children in their care.

If there are similarities and differences between pre-school and primary school teachers’ opinions regarding their understanding of writing development, this is likely to be revealed in their planning of lessons, which makes a review of these lesson plans an appropriate method in order to understand how children are supported in both educational settings through the teachers’ professional decision making. I collected the teachers’ lesson plans and additional notes (if they had them), and any materials that they used to support their lesson plans related to writing instruction and activities in the classroom. These documents were collected at the beginning of the

observations, as I wanted to be prepared and aware of how the lessons were intended to go. The decision to gather and analyse the documents should be linked to the questions developed for the research (Marshall & Rossman, 2016); therefore, investigating these lesson plans for this study would allow me to understand how the teachers support young writers within pre-school and in the first year of primary school education, and to explore any similarities and differences between them.

4.5.7 Video Recordings

Writing activities were observed once a week in each of three classrooms, and were recorded each time by a video camera. It was important to record these activities, since the observations took place in three different schools with four focus children in each classroom, and continued through the transition from pre-school to primary school, ensuring a continuous capture of what was happening at all times, along with field notes. The collection of visual data enabled me to see what happened in the classroom, which was likely to provide important contextual information when analysing the other data sets. The aim in using video recordings was to understand the phenomena in detail, which might give an answer to these research sub-questions:

- 'How are teaching practices in the two settings similar or different? Do pre-school and primary teachers engage in different classroom practices in relation to early writing skills?'
- 'How are beliefs about early writing development in the two settings similar or different?'
- 'Is there continuity between the two phases (pre-school and primary school)?'
- 'How do the children who I will follow from pre-school to primary school respond to the different settings?'

Audio-visual recordings allow researchers to capture both verbal and non-verbal interactions, and they can save time and release the researcher from the burden of keeping a detailed manual recording of observations or field notes (Cohen, et al., 2011). In this research, I used video recordings as a supplementary tool to the study, which enabled me to focus on the children whom I had chosen to follow from pre-school to the primary school phase. It would have been very difficult if I had had to write every single detail of the observation protocol without using a video recorder. In addition, data from video recordings is particularly useful when documenting activities related to non-verbal action and communication, such as capturing the phonological

awareness of children in the study (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Through reviewing the materials recorded it was possible to make more sense of the other data, which gave me the opportunity to reflect on each recording, noting behaviour and events of which I was not previously aware.

I hoped that despite the presence of the video cameras the children and teachers would feel comfortable in a natural setting, and would act in an increasingly uninhibited way as they became familiarised with the camera in the classroom. After discussions with teachers about where to position the video camera so as to be as unobtrusive as possible, I tried to sustain the natural classroom setting. However, due to the nature of the classrooms it was not always possible to fix the video camera unobtrusively during the study. Therefore, the quality of the audio-visual recordings was not of the same standard at all times. Nevertheless, the video data was used as a valuable source of data in this research, and it allowed me to link the lessons and the contents of the writing instruction, and draw inferences in terms of how teachers support children's writing.

4.5.8 Field Notes

Within the interpretive paradigm, it is common to use field notes to document certain participant observation activities (Mack, et al., 2005). Once field notes have been written, researchers need to expand their notes with rich descriptions following each participant observation event. It is possible to review the field notes between observations, as well as to obtain a chain of evidence which enables the researcher to defend his or her methodological decisions (Patton, 1990). According to Emerson et al. (1995, p. 13), field notes are a "distinctive resource for preserving experience close to the moment of occurrence and, hence, for deepening reflection upon and understanding of those experiences". After the event, being able to reflect on experiences allows the researcher to continue his or her engagement with the data. It is also possible through field notes to compare similar situations, and to reflect on linguistic content.

Notes taken in this research during the observations were not regarded as a developmental device for formulating ideas; however, they were seen as 'raw data', in the form of handwritten notes used to capture contextual commentary on specific moments of interest not provided in the recordings (Mason, 2002). In addition, I do not see the field notes as complete but rather as an ongoing and reflective process which

has provided me with a deeper understanding, such that re-reading, reflecting and adding ideas was possible. In the beginning, I used field notes to provide written descriptions, which was a straightforward process. Then, I created an electronic file which documents the timeline of the data collection, which enabled me to have a chronological narrative of the research (Cohen & Manion, 1994).

4.6 PILOTING OF THE INSTRUMENTS

“One particular use that pilot studies have in qualitative research is to generate an understanding of the concepts and theories held by the people you are studying.” (Maxwell, 2008, p. 227). A trial of the instruments which were involved in the design of the study was carried out prior to the first phase of the study – observations. It was deemed necessary to carry out a trial of the research process in order both to check whether the instruments used in the research were comprehensible to the participants, and also to assess the appropriateness of these instruments to the research aims and questions. In addition, it provided me with an understanding of the concepts addressed by the research context. My assumptions had been shaped through the initial research questions and framed through the data collection methods, together with my prior professional experience. As the piloting of instruments progressed, I positioned myself as a researcher in the classroom environment, linking the research questions of the study with the study itself, and I had the chance to review the chosen data collection methods.

The piloting of the instruments took place in the first week of the main study, and involved a trial of the interviews for the pre-school and primary school teachers, and a trial of the video recordings. The purpose of the pilot was three-fold: to experience the role of being a researcher in the classroom context in contrast to my previous experience as a teacher; to practice keeping the research questions at the heart of the observations and interviews; and to consider how I might document accurately the teachers’ and children’s writing practices at the school. As a consequence of the piloting, I specified where to put the camera in the classrooms in order not to distract the children and teachers. I did not change many things in the interview, except for the wording and phrasing of some of the questions.

4.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

I used two interview protocols that I designed for the pre-school and primary school teachers, and conducted interviews with two teachers (one pre-school and one primary school teacher). These teachers were chosen randomly in the same city where I carried out my study. They were experienced teachers in the field, with different genders. The interview questions were discussed with my supervisors prior to the study, and both semi-structured interviews included similar questions, designed to help me understand what pre-school and primary school teachers think about the writing development of young children, and how it is supported in both settings. The trialling of the interview protocols and the responses of the teachers led to some amendments in the wording and phrasing of the questions. As I prepared interview questions in English first and then transcribed them into Turkish, there was a degree of vagueness in some of the statements; therefore, by correcting them, I was able to obtain clearer answers. It was valuable to practice the interview protocols in terms of the process of conducting the interviews in the actual study, as it gave me the opportunity to check the clarity of the questions, and made me realise that I needed to be as flexible as possible when asking more questions about emerging issues in light of the teachers' responses to the basic agenda of my interviews. During the piloting of the interviews, my intention was to obtain answers to the guiding questions; however, I realised that interviewees might explain a variety of things in response to one question. Also, I was able to discuss other issues that emerged during the conversations in order to have a broader understanding of how they perceived early writing, and how they reflected it in their practice.

4.6.2 Video Recordings

According to Johnson and Christensen (2014), visual data collection is one of the richest methods of data collection. It was not possible to run video recordings prior to the first official recording in the classrooms with the children and teachers, because of the nature of my research. However, I set up the recording equipment in the empty classrooms, and performed numerous dry runs. These runs helped me to familiarise myself with the research process. The dry runs also allowed me to have an opportunity to experiment with various practices with the video recordings and how to optimise the quality of the recordings, which was helpful in the main study as it allowed me to start

recording the classroom practices immediately during the observations, as well as to analyse the data coming from the recordings in depth.

4.7 DATA ANALYSIS

In any qualitative research, how the research is expressed is the key to the rigour of the study, and it is possible to ensure rigour and credibility through the use of multiple sources of data. However, there are some challenges in the analysis phase, as the researcher should be clear about the volume of documents available for scrutiny, and thus an appropriate method of analysis must be employed.

4.7.1 Thematic Analysis

For this study, thematic analysis was chosen, as it is a flexible yet foundational method which allows the researcher to incorporate any epistemological approach and ontological position with the analysis and findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis is defined as “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 6), which allows the researcher to provide a rich and detailed, as well as complex, account of the data. In this study, an inductive approach has been taken; therefore, thematic analysis has allowed me to complete the data set before the analysis process, as well as acknowledging and deliberating upon the structures of signification (Geertz, 1973). Besides, thematic analysis of my data matched with what I wanted to know and to understand.

Thematic analysis contributes to this study, as it facilitates going beyond merely describing ideas found within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). However, it is also open to criticism of the researcher’s role as an interpreter; it is possible for the researcher to make decisions about choosing the items to be analysed. In this study, the aim is to understand how writing development is understood in early years education; therefore, I chose items related to the research questions by using the five-phase analysis process of Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarising yourself with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; and defining and naming themes.

4.7.2 The Use of NVivo11 as Computer-Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software

The NVivo 11 computer programme was used to analyse the data collected through multiple methods: the semi-structured interviews and the focus group interview.

According to Carcary (2011), a CAQDAS (computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software) package can help a researcher to create “an efficient data management system whereby large volumes of unstructured evidence can be systematically organised” (p. 14). Using a computerised system brings a number of benefits and pitfalls to a study. It is claimed that CAQDAS can create a distance between the researcher and the data (Welsh, 2002), which represents the opposite of the aim which I set in this study as an interpretivist researcher. Therefore, CAQDAS was used in this study as part of the multi-tooling of this qualitative research, rather than utilising it as an alternative to analysis with pen and paper.

NVivo helped me in analysing the data to increase the robustness of the findings, by enabling the organisation and analysis of a large amount of data. NVivo also allowed me to manage a large number of codes, as well as to create themes which represent both minority and majority views.

4.7.3 Final Data Set

The final data set was as follows: six semi-structured interviews, one focus group interview, 22 pieces of video footage which were used to clarify and check details as a supplementary tool to the observation notes (about one hour each), 22 observational notes, hundreds of pages of lesson plans, and 512 samples of the focus children’s writing.

4.7.4 Data Analysis

4.7.4.1 Phase One: Familiarisation of Data

An inductive approach has been taken in this study with an emphasis on the descriptive and exploratory themes that emerged, rather than a deductive approach which aims to confirm a hypothesis (Cohen, et al., 2011). Themes emerged throughout the analysis, and the intention was to avoid the influence of prior experience as much as possible. Taking an interpretive stance, I kept in my mind the notion that ‘themes do not reside in the data, they reside in our heads’ (Ely, et al., 1997, p. 205). The original intention was to transcribe the data based on the sound recordings, and then translate them into English where possible, to make sense of the data as a whole. I read and coded all of the semi-structured interviews and focus group transcripts using the excerpt creation and coding facility on NVivo 11. For the analyses of the observational data, lesson plans and writing samples of the children, I used a more

traditional method – the manual process of coding – using a hard copy of the transcripts, stored in a lever-arch file and organised based on the progress over time as well as the activities done in the classroom. For this process, a paragraph-by-paragraph approach was taken by highlighting the significant places in which I was interested, and I then drew out my initial concepts and ideas.

During the first phase of the thematic analysis, I aimed to become immersed in the dataset and identify the initial points of interest. In total, 16 points of interest were determined for a total of five different datasets. I cross-referenced them against the research questions, and created a table of outcomes (Table 4.9).

Research questions	Datasets	Themes in datasets	The number of codes
RQ 1*	Semi-structured interviews	Beliefs about the other institution	7
		Early writing skills	8
		Writing pedagogy	6
RQ 1	Focus group interview	Early writing development	9
		Influences on classroom practices	23
RQ 1 RQ 2*	Observations	Writing activity	-
		Writing skill	-
		Resources	-
		Classroom organisation	-
		Teaching approach	-
RQ 1	Lesson plans	Socio-cultural development	3
		Linguistic development	5
		Cognitive development	4
RQ 2	Children's samples	Developmental range	-
		Pre-school	6
		Primary school	8

Tablo 4. 9: Phase One: Familiarisation of data – points of interest linked to the research questions:

(RQ 1: What is the relationship between teachers' beliefs about early writing development and classroom culture and practices, in both pre-school and the first year of primary education?

RQ 2: How do these classroom cultures and practices impact on children's writing behaviour?)

I worked on the data sets separately first, and then, I combined them to create a meaningful findings chapter. In the beginning of the analysis, I read through the transcripts through NVivo or on paper as a more traditional way to analyse and I created codes as I encountered the ideas or concepts which seemed relevant to the context of early writing skills, instruction or development. This first step was a very intuitive response to the data although it was informed by my experiences while collecting the data and my developing thinking throughout the research process. Initially I created hundreds of codes which reflected pre-school and primary school teachers' understandings relating to concepts such as fine-motor skills, beliefs about each others' institution, cognitive development, and all manner of things which were in relation to the text and textual forms. Then, I created larger folders to place the aforementioned codes in; for instance, fine-motor skills, pencil-holding skills and phonological awareness seemed to fit into an overarching 'early writing skills' folder. Very simple terms such as writing skills could be coded as skills and could then be divided into sub codes in terms of what they represent, for example the codes cited above forming a larger cluster of codes relating to early writing skills might be subdivided into motor skills and phonics skills.

I approached this coding process adopting a predominantly bottom-up strategy, labelling ideas that were expressed or implied by participants themselves. However, it was also an active process since I interpreted what teachers were saying or what writing samples were showing, and constructed the codes myself. Rather than only adopting my research questions as a key to analyse, the coding process was iterative in terms of responding to the data while also applying this responsethe existing theory in my literature review. For instance, when I encountered a new concept or idea, I searched for the literature and then, created a new code. I created these codes tentatively rather than as definite themes, approaching them as possible questions. This referencing of the data, the empirical literature and theory in an iterative process

enabled me to have a wider scope and to see possible overlaps or patterns emerging through the analysis process.

4.7.4.2 Interview and Focus Group Interview Data

This analysis involved open coding of the teachers' responses to the interview questions that referred to early writing development. Focusing only on aspects which are relevant to early writing, and guided by the research sub-questions, I aimed to explore the teachers' views, beliefs and understandings towards early writing in relation to writing skills and classroom practices. This was based on new categories which were grounded on the data, on what the teachers said about young writers, and on how they support early writing in the classroom in this particular research context. At the beginning of the analysis of interviews, I coded the teachers' responses into various concepts via NVivo 11 (see Appendix 2.e), then I put similar concepts together and labelled each group within a tentative category. I read the responses related to each category several times, and I finalised the emerging themes of the analysis:

- a. Early writing skills
- b. Beliefs about institutions
- c. Writing pedagogy
- d. Influences on classroom practice

Stages of coding process	Progressive focusing of data
Familiarisation with data through initial reading of semi-structured interviews	Four main categories identified
Initial coding of teacher responses over several iterations	Up to 40 codes for each category
Creating themes	23 themes with identified sub-codes
Identification of themes	Creating frameworks for coding process

Tablo 4. 10: Interview coding process

CODING OF INTERVIEW ANALYSIS		
Theme	Category type	Explanation
Early writing skills	Emerging	Relates to statements about teachers' views and beliefs in terms of early writing skills.
Beliefs about institution	Emerging	Relates to statements about teachers' beliefs about the pre-school and primary school institutions, teachers and continuity.
Writing pedagogy	Emerging	Relates to statements which concern classroom practices and teaching.
Influences on classroom practices	Emerging	Relates to statements which concern the curriculum, institutions, pedagogy and practices, beliefs and values, and social influences.

Tablo 4. 11: Coding of interview analysis

I coded six interview transcripts and the focus group interview transcript independently, in order to identify sub-codes. After agreeing on an initial label for the coding, I coded all of the subsequent transcripts together. Any inconsistencies occurring during the analysis process were resolved before moving on to the discussion. I also re-coded the teachers' statements when there was any uncertainty about the codes, or when any comment held two meanings. With each new theme, I revisited the interview transcripts and reviewed all of the codes and sub-codes. I addressed whether any of the teachers' responses could correspond to the existing categories; in this case, there were no new codes required, and I considered the framework sufficiently inclusive. As the next step, I reduced the codes in each theme by gathering similar topics, issues and/or arguments under thematic headings. In this

respect, I identified a manageable number of codes, sub-codes and main themes for the three different areas of the research, as discussed in the relevant findings chapter.

4.7.4.3 Observation Data

The purpose of using observation schedules in this study was to provide a contextual framework for the study through understanding the teachers' and students' reflections in the classroom, as well as prompting their recall (Appendix 3.b). Teachers' practices in the classroom and their comments about the students' writing were also used to build clearer profiles of both the focus children as individual writers and also the teachers, who play an important role in supporting young writers.

The data which emerged from the observation schedules were analysed qualitatively in the traditional way, using a pen and paper. First of all, I translated all of my observational notes into English in order to achieve consistency with the interview data. Then, I made several photocopies of these notes and read through them to become familiarised. This gave me the opportunity to distinguish the data into classroom context, classroom practices and focus children (see Appendix 3.c). I organised these notes first of all based on time, to create a timeline of the progress for each focus child, and then I looked to see how this mapped onto the activities that were done in each classroom context. This enabled me to take each of three pre-school classrooms and create profiles for each classroom (with the help of the interview data as well), and to contrast the different contexts and explore whether there were any differences between them. Then, I was able to look at how the children from each context developed in the primary school through their writing samples.

The video recording data was used as supportive material for these schedules, and as a reference point to review what I had in the schedules. I watched these recordings several times before analysing the observational data. I then compared them with my notes on the observed classrooms, and made additional notes when necessary.

4.7.4.4 Text Revisions

All of the focus children's writing samples were collected through the observations, and were organised based on the aforementioned timeline. In the analysis process, I looked for whether there were any surface changes, such as in terms of mechanical elements or accuracy; any stylistic changes such as minor additions, deletions, rewordings or rephrasing; any structural changes; and any content changes, such as

in the ideas or arguments written. Then, I came up with ten different areas of development that I could follow in the children's writing samples, in the transition from pre-school to primary school education: fine motor skills; phonological awareness; emergent forms; spelling; handwriting; content; punctuation; teacher-student interactions; re-reading the writing; and accompanying language. Coding the texts included drawings, paintings, scribbles, letter-like symbols, letters, words, sentences, gaps between words and punctuation. These were all conducted jointly; however, it was occasionally unclear how to classify a text change. For instance, students in pre-school sometimes wrote their names on their activities without being asked, but this did not mean that the other students in the classroom did not know how to write their names. Therefore, it did not strictly reflect the children's development, nor did it mean that some students were more developed and/or capable of writing than others. Another example from primary school was that the students sometimes substituted letters or words for accuracy rather than changing the text's style, and sometimes to correct accidental wording. In this case, it was possible to understand the underlying reason for the students' actions. These analyses of the students' written samples were also used to create writer profiles, which will be discussed in the findings chapter, and three of these profiles have provided a picture of below average, average and above average writers in the study.

4.7.4.5 Lesson Plans

The lesson plans of the teachers who were observed in the study – three pre-school and three primary school teachers – were collected throughout the observations. Depending on the teacher, these plans were taken before the observations or at the end during the interviews. The teachers gave their lesson plans for the whole academic year, beginning from the September through to June, including their daily, weekly, monthly and yearly plans for activities and/or developments that they had planned for the children, which generated a large amount of papers to analyse. So, I had to decide what to include in the analysis in order to make sense of these plans and to answer my research questions. I chose to focus on the teachers' achievement plans, in order to understand what they wanted to improve through the activities taking place in their classroom practices.

I divided the lesson plans into two groups: pre-school and primary school teachers. The rationale for this was to understand if there were any similarities or differences

between the two educational contexts, and if there was any continuity across the two phases in terms of the teachers' lesson plans. I did not translate these plans into English deliberately, in order to save time and to focus on the analysis. I used italics in the places where I quoted directly from the lesson plans.

The analysis was similar to the analysis of the interview data; a thematic analysis was used. First of all, I familiarised myself with the lesson plans by reading them thoroughly, several times. Then, I generated initial codes based on a timeline to see the progress made and how writing was supported throughout the year. I carried out a deeper analysis of the codes in the next step, where a combination of different codes was used in order to identify common patterns that could form potential themes. I thoroughly reviewed all of the codes and the information which supported each theme, and thus I came up with a more accurate refinement of the themes. The only difference between the interviews and the lesson plans was that I used highlighters and printed copies of the lesson plans whilst analysing them.

4.7.4.6 Field Notes

I kept field notes during the observations as a data collection method in two different ways. On the one hand, a contextual indication concerning the teachers' comments and responses and practices in terms of writing was used to inform my interpretation of the teachers' and children's responses and their profiles. On the other hand, incidental data which arose during the classroom observations and relevant expressions from the classroom teachers and the focus children were analysed to elaborate on the codes and themes with the support of the video recordings, and these are reported with the lesson plans in the findings chapters.

4.8 RESEARCH ETHICS AND ANONYMITY

"Ethics are an essential part of rigorous research. Ethics are more than a set of principles or abstract rules that sit as an overarching entity guiding our research... Ethics exist in our actions and in our ways of doing and practising our research; we perceive ethics to be always in progress, never to be taken for granted, but flexible, and responsive to change" (Davies & Dodd, 2002, p. 281). As this research involved children, who are particularly vulnerable, as participants in the observations, it is important to make the ethical considerations explicit. Special care needs to be taken to help children understand where they have choices and when they can say 'no'.

Therefore, it was important to inform the children in a manner appropriate to pre-school and primary aged students, to help them understand why I was there, what would happen when I came to visit them, and how long I would be within the classroom. Thus, I needed to consider my ethical judgement as a researcher, and conduct my research based on these ethical considerations. As the aim of the study is to explore how children are supported in both pre-school and primary school settings in terms of writing development, and to understand the classroom practices of teachers in these two settings, certain important issues were regarded and negotiated in order to ensure the children's and teachers' wellbeing, and to avoid any breach of the ethical principles set by associations such as BERA (British Educational Research Association).

The ethical issues that have mainly been considered in this research involve access to and acceptance in the study field, respecting the privacy of participants, anonymity and confidentiality, and these are discussed in the next section.

4.8.1 Access and Acceptance

It was necessary to obtain access to the schools where the study was planned to be conducted, and acceptance by those whose permission was essential before embarking on the task. According to Cohen and Manion (1994), gaining official permission is the first step that a researcher needs to consider before beginning any study. For the purposes of this study, ethical approval for the study was sought from the Ethics Committee at the University of Exeter; I explained all of the ethical issues and how the research would be performed (see Appendix 1.b). In addition, official permission was obtained from the Turkish Ministry of National Education (see Appendix 1.a). I sent my documents to the Turkish Embassy in London in order to explain the aims of my research, the research design and the research methods to be used in the study, and I provided them with my research instruments: semi-structured interview protocols, observation protocols, and focus group interview protocols. Once this was approved, I was given the names of five primary schools by the Turkish Ministry of National Education, which included pre-school provisions within them, to ensure that I could follow the focus children from pre-school to the primary school phase. However, in three of these schools there were problems for me in terms of collecting data, such as the schools not doing writing activities anymore, preparing for the year-end show, or planning to spend the last month of school doing trips. Therefore, I needed to find new schools based on the official permission of the

Ministry, and to this end I found one other school which was appropriate for my research aims and allowed me to obtain good data. As a consequence, I ended up with three schools in which to conduct my research.

The next step was to go ahead with my study within the context of the schools to which I had been allocated by the Embassy, and I visited the school directors in order to gain their acceptance, as well as contacting the teachers. In my study, the participants were three pre-school and three primary school teachers, and the students in their classrooms. The teachers participated in the study based on their own will, as I informed them of the research process and the purpose, nature and possible outcomes of the research; therefore, they made their own choices to be involved in the study (see Appendix 1.c). I made observations in the first days of the study as a pilot, and chose four students in each pre-school classroom, whom I would follow through to the first year of their primary education. In the selection of the focus children in the study (see Section 4.2.1), I communicated with the parents or legal guardians of the children in order to obtain their informed consent (see Appendix 1.d), as the children were too young to make their own decisions on whether or not to take part in the study (BERA, 2011), as explained below.

4.8.2 Informed Consent

Informed consent is the principle that ensures a participant's right to freedom and self-determination. It can be seen as a procedure that allows individuals to choose whether they are willing to take part in a study, after being informed of the facts that might have an influence on their decisions (Cohen & Manion, 1994). This definition emphasises the four elements of "competence, voluntarism, full information, and comprehension" (Cohen & Manion, 1994, p. 350). In other words, the researcher is responsible for providing information about the study which may affect the subjects' decisions to participate, making sure that the participants understand that information, ensuring that their participation is voluntary, and deciding how to proceed if the subjects are not sufficiently competent to decide for themselves.

In light of these elements, I sought the informed consent of pre-school and primary school teachers by providing them with as much information as possible about the study (see Appendix 1.c). However, given that the other participants in the study were pre-school and primary school children aged four to seven, the informed consent of the children could not have been regarded as sufficient to ensure the ethical conduct

of this research. I needed to obtain further informed consent from the children's parents or legal guardians (see Appendix 1.d). To ensure that the parents were fully informed, after I started the observations in May I asked the teachers to invite the parents to a meeting in the presence of the teachers and me. During the meeting, I gave them all of the information necessary for them to know how the study would take place in the classrooms. I emphasised that the research context and my existence would neither affect the normal curriculum practice nor result in any educational disadvantage. I asked the parents or legal guardians of the focus children to sign the informed consent document, as I would be following these children as they transition to primary education, and I would be using the data collected from these children's works (see Appendix 1.d). I explained to them that if they wished their children could be excluded from the study and their data could be removed from the study. All of the parents gave their consent, and I obtained an additional informed consent form from the parents of the focus children. In parallel, the teachers and I explained to the children my role and their roles in the research, and I obtained their consent and willingness to participate in the research.

Even after consent was granted, explicit consideration was given to the participants' continuing rights and needs by ensuring that they were comfortable and happy to participate in all stages of the study.

4.8.3 Privacy, Anonymity and Confidentiality

Participants' privacy is of great importance; therefore, a researcher should be aware of the sensitivity of the information taken from subjects, such as publicising personal issues, which the participant might not allow. Through anonymity and confidentiality, a researcher can protect this privacy (Cohen & Manion, 1994). A researcher should not reveal any information related to the identity of the participants in terms of anonymity. Additionally, a researcher has an obligation not to publicise information which might allow others to recognise the participants in terms of confidentiality.

As well as assuming a philosophical ethical stance, it is also significant to adhere to practical conventions (BERA, 2011). In this study, the personal or sensitive information about the participants – both teachers and children – was protected by retaining their anonymity (BERA, 2011). The participants' names were changed when discussing the data. Concerning dissemination of the research findings, I ensured that the anonymity of the pre-school and primary school teachers and children observed during the study

and the names of the schools remained anonymous, as well as ensuring that all of the personal data which arose from the research were kept strictly confidential.

I believe and hope that I addressed the ethical issues raised in the context of this study successfully, by adopting a self-critical stance towards these ethical obligations.

4.9 TRUSTWORTHINESS AND CREDIBILITY

Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed the concept of 'trustworthiness' as an alternative to the traditional concepts of reliability and validity. These traditional terms are arguably inappropriate within the interpretivist paradigm, as they are premised on methods seeking to be neutral and non-biased (Mason, 2002). Thus, they are measures of objectivity. The paradigm that informs this research, however, seeks to understand subjective experience. Instead, 'transferability', 'dependability', 'credibility' and 'confirmability' are proposed as terms which can be used to establish trustworthiness when using qualitative methodologies (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Through a variety of methods used to understand the different facets of teachers' practices and beliefs in terms of the writing skills of young children, and to explore how these young children develop their writings, I attempted to ensure the credibility of the study. I also offered my interpretations to the teachers after each observation, to obtain their comments and/or reflections. In this interpretive study, the observations, semi-structured interviews, focus group interview, children's writings and materials used during classroom practices, alongside the lesson plans of each classroom I observed, have provided me with a rich and multifaceted picture of how writing is understood in pre-school and primary school settings.

Member-checking was used in this research design, which provided a credibility check on my interpretations of the data collected through multiple methods. Although member-checking can be seen as part of a realistic ontology, a consensus interpretation of the data complies with the informing paradigm present in this study, as social reality is constructed through the interpretations of the individuals who constitute society (Birt, et al., 2016). According to Shenton (2004), there are a variety of ways in which to ensure credibility when establishing trustworthiness. At the beginning of the study, the adopted research methods were chosen carefully in order to ensure the selection of the correct operational measures for the concepts being researched (p. 64). A degree of random sampling (the schools were chosen by the Turkish Ministry of National Education) was used in this research; therefore, the

selection of teachers and focus children who were involved in the study was also random (p. 65). The aim of using multiple methods in a study is to explore complexity rather than having one data set which will inevitably confirm the findings from another, which is the aim of triangulation. In this design, the different data sets build on each other to provide a fuller picture, but each picture might offer something new and even different rather than being complementary: observations, semi-structured interviews, a focus group interview, children's writing samples, and the lesson plans of teachers were all used to strengthen the data by reducing their individual limitations (p. 65). Additionally, 'frequent debriefing sessions' (p. 67) occurred in this study through meetings with my supervisors, in which we discussed the methods used to collect data and the process of analysing the data, which have also been subjected to 'peer scrutiny' (p. 67) through research conferences, in order to obtain feedback. Besides, I debriefed my participating teachers by keeping them informed of my thoughts and intentions throughout the different stages of the project. To assist with transferability, the contextual description of the research, the information about the schools and participants, as well as the research methods adopted, were given (Creswell, 2012). In addition, the range of participants being selected from 'multiple environments' (described in Section 4.2.2) can also improve this part of the process (Shenton, 2004, p. 70). In order to improve dependability, a variety of steps were taken: reporting the process of the study in detail, and the use of 'overlapping methods' (p. 71) involving observations and interviews in order to provide evidence of the classroom practices in terms of writing development. Through providing a clear audit trail and discussing my own background and predispositions (in the introduction) (p. 72), as well as acknowledgement of the constraints of the research and of the data collection methods (in this chapter), I have attempted to increase the confirmability of this research.

In order to evaluate interpretive research, guidance should be provided on how the research findings will be reported. A research report should not be a closed narrative used to structure the study with tight arguments; however, it should be a more open narrative that can raise questions and provide situatedness and partiality (Creswell, 2012). Thus, it is essential to emphasise the gaps in the research and the tensions in the research report, as well as providing what is presented and what is missing from it, which are discussed in the following section on the limitations and strengths of the study, and in Chapter 8 – Summary and Conclusions.

4.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Methodological choices inevitably lead to particular gains and losses. Adopting an interpretive approach means that research findings might have a broad influence, whereas there might be a number of limitations to the study.

4.10.1 Sample Characteristics and Size

There are no claims in this research related to the representativeness of the schools, teachers or students chosen. The research findings cannot be supposed to apply in other circumstances related to writing skills in the early years due to the characteristics of the schools which have taken part in the study. Neither the schools, teachers nor students were chosen based on ethnical diversity, nor do they represent a full range of the socio-economic structure of the country. While large samples allow for findings to be generalised to a wider population, I have chosen to analyse a smaller sample in detail. In particular, the writing samples of the focus children were collected in order to understand how they react to two different stages in their education, and this cannot be extrapolated to other tasks such as the quality of writing they produced.

4.10.2 Selection bias

A special effort was made to recruit focus children with a range of different writing abilities; however, the selection criteria involved whether these focus children would continue on to primary education in the same school with the same teacher, as I aimed to follow these children from pre-school towards the first year of primary school. This would have ruled out many students, particularly the ones who were not clear whether they would continue on to primary education in the same school or not, and so my attempt to capture a representative sample was limited to those children who would transition into the same school.

4.10.3 Contextual and Task Variables

There were no common writing tasks for all of the participants in the study. Particularly, the purpose of choosing different schools with different teachers and children was to understand how teachers support writing skills in the classroom, and what they do to support young writers in the classroom environment. Therefore, there were different approaches adopted by each teacher, which affected their decisions on how to support children, which materials they use during activities, and the time allocated for writing.

Consequently, the data cannot support generalisations based on classroom context or any tasks related to writing, nor make comparisons between the responses of the participants – pre-school or primary school teachers or focus children – based on these variables. Nevertheless, given that one of the aims was to understand teachers' decision making and what this revealed about their own understanding of early writing development, this variability is also a strength, as it is precisely in these differences that these views and perspectives are revealed. However, the writing tasks in the observed classrooms were typical for this age group (four to seven), and in line with the Turkish Ministry of National Education requirements, thus the research findings can be influential in other situations. In addition, classroom practices in terms of writing activities vary, and conditions are always dynamic in schools; thus their broad features cannot be applied elsewhere, and it is precisely this variability that I sought to understand.

4.10.4 Researcher Impact

The methodology chosen for the study, which allowed me as a researcher to observe classrooms once a week, might have increased the teachers' awareness and understanding of how they approach early writing development. Additionally, it might have prompted closer attention to writing activities amongst others than would have normally been the case in the classroom, or might have improved the teachers' motivation to use different techniques than would have been used during writing activities. The existence of a researcher in the classroom environment might also have had an impact on the children. As it is not possible to distinguish the effect of the research process and any background knowledge and strategies that teachers bring to the research, it is essential to report the outcomes of the study while bearing this possible confounding influence in mind. However, certain methods were chosen for this study in order to decrease the interference with normal classroom routines and to minimise researcher impact.

4.11 STRENGTHS OF THE STUDY

The use of qualitative methodology in this study distinguishes it from previous research, and raises issues which could lead to the development of a new understanding in the field.

4.11.1 Pedagogical Choices, Learner Responses, Textual Responses and Longitudinal Changes

Different methods of data collection were involved in this study, which allowed me to compare the findings from each component after analysis within the study with findings from other studies, such as Berninger's (2000) description of writing development from graphomotor skills through a predictable course, or Ivancic's (2004) six discourses of writing and learning to write. These comparisons helped me as a researcher to raise new questions for further study. Through the integration of different methods in this research, a composite picture of how writing is supported in early years classrooms can be provided. This enabled me to create new connections between teaching approaches in the classroom and the writing development of young children, and this might extend the understanding of the transition process of young writers from the pre-school to the primary school stage.

4.11.2 Naturalistic Context for Writing

The school-based context offers an understanding of writing practices in classroom environments, which might be different to other circumstances such as the home environment. Such a study could explore students' naturalistic writing behaviours and teachers' practices which support young writers. By studying how students react to these two different phases of education – pre-school and primary school – and how they handle the transition process, as well as teachers' understandings of early writing, this research might allow the identification of strategies used in classroom practices to enhance the support of children's writing development, thus informing the hypotheses that experimental researchers test. With a naturalistic study, a contextualised understanding of writing and behaviours in the classroom can also be captured. Therefore, through this research I am exploring the writing conditions that occur in the classroom which might have an influence on students' reactions to different writing activities.

4.11.3 Incremental Model of Data Collection

The research design, which is divided into phases, allowed me to explore early writing at all stages of the activities in the classrooms. This could extend the knowledge obtained by studies which particularly focus on writing development or instruction, such as primary school teachers' writing instruction (Graham & Harris, 2002), or young

children's school readiness and the acquisition of literacy (Gunduz & Caliskan, 2013). This consideration of early writing from pre-school through to primary education provides a view of early writing development in its entirety, from drawing and scribbling through to conventional writing. An iterative design of the study also helped me to refine and revise the questions, and the teachers to refine their responses, in light of emerging evidence. To my knowledge, there is no recent study which has been conducted to explore how the early writing skills of young children are understood in the pre-school and primary school contexts in terms of writing development in this way. The methodology adopted in this study was used to provide a new insight into early writing development and the understanding of it for school purposes, and to make an original contribution to the existing knowledge.

4.12 SUMMARY

In this chapter, I have attempted to outline and explain the research methodology adopted in this study. I began with an identification of the study within the interpretive paradigm and the underpinning epistemology and ontology. Then, I explained and justified the selection of data collection methods, and why this is an appropriate and relevant methodology which can be used to investigate my research questions. Then, the research context and research design were discussed, and the piloting of the research instruments prior to the study and the research process were explained. In addition, the data analysis stages and the related issues of ethics were discussed. Finally, credibility and trustworthiness, as well as the various ways to ensure them in the study, were explained. The limitations and strengths of the study were given in the last section of this chapter.

In the following section, the data analysis and findings will be approached in the order of three separate chapters: classroom practices, focus children's responses, and teachers' awareness of early writing skills. I will first focus on classroom practices, then on how these practices impact children's writing, before presenting the teachers' beliefs that are related to these two pedagogic contexts. The purpose of discussing the data on the teachers' beliefs is that these are most likely to contribute to my research aims, but understanding these comments requires an understanding of the context within which they belong, and the interface between beliefs and practices is an important aspect of the aims of the study.

CHAPTER 5: CLASSROOM PRACTICES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The coding of the observational data required a more holistic approach than the other datasets, in order to incorporate more contextual detail. This process focused on developing a descriptive framework, which might help me to understand the relationships between the teachers' beliefs and practices, and to outline how the participants (both the teachers and the focus children) experience the phenomenon.

Throughout the study, I observed pre-school classrooms 10 times altogether and each primary classroom four times, or 12 times altogether, which meant a total of 22 observations across all of the classrooms. Firstly, my observation notes (see Appendix 3.a for an example) were summarised to produce a description of the teachers' pedagogical approaches in detail. I grouped the teachers depending on the educational setting, either pre-school or primary school, to see the similarities and differences between them, and then I framed the teaching practices into five themes: writing activity, supported writing skill, resources used, classroom organisation and teaching approach (see Table 5.1). Secondly, my observation notes were analysed to understand the patterns and purposes of the activities which the focus children experienced in terms of early writing. Video recordings of these lessons and activities were used as a backup to these notes, and these were revisited to provide additional detail and contextual information for the notes.

Classroom practice	Pre-school classrooms			Primary school classrooms		
	<i>School A</i>	<i>School B</i>	<i>School C</i>	<i>School A</i>	<i>School B</i>	<i>School C</i>
First Week						
Writing activity	Painting/ sticking together/ writing numbers	Painting/ counting/ writing numbers	Making lines/ talking about beginning sounds	Painting/ making lines	Making lines	Making lines
Supported writing skill	Fine motor skills	Fine motor skills	Fine motor skills/ phonological awareness	Fine motor skills	Fine motor skills	Fine motor skills
Resources	Crayons/ glue/ books	Worksheets/ books	Books	Books/ notebooks	Notebooks/ smartboard	Notebooks
Classroom organisation	Individual	Individual	Individual	Individual	Individual	Individual
Teaching approach	Modelling/ guiding	Guiding	Guiding	Modelling/ guiding	Modelling/ guiding	Modelling/ guiding
Second week						

Writing activity	Painting	Talking about 'commas' and beginning letters	Writing numbers/ painting/ making lines	Writing 'e' and 'E' sounds/ painting/ capital letters	Finding the place of sounds in words/ singing/ making lines	Writing letters/ capital letters/ no sound-letter relationship
Supported writing skill	Fine motor skills	Phonological awareness/ punctuation	Fine motor skills	Fine motor skills/ linguistic skills	Phonological awareness/ fine motor skills	Fine motor skills
Resources	Crayons/ worksheets	Smartboard	Books	Board/ books/ notebooks/ worksheets	The smartboard/ A4 paper	The board/ notebooks
Classroom organisation	Individual	Whole group activity	Individual	Individual	Individual/ small group	Individual
Third week						
Writing activity	Free activity	Riddles and finger games	Making lines/ writing numbers/ painting	Creating words with letters learned	Creating words with letters and sentences with words/ learning new letters/ capital letters/ punctuation	The sound-letter relationship/ combining letters to create words

Supported writing skill	Motor skills	Linguistic	Fine motor skills	Linguistic	Linguistic	Linguistic
Resources	Anything in the classroom	No resources	Books	Notebooks	The smartboard/notebook	Worksheet/books/ the board
Classroom organisation	No organisation	Whole group activity	Individual	Individual	Individual	Individual
Fourth week						
Writing activity			Playing	Teaching letters/ creating words and combining words to create sentences	Learning new letters and creating words and sentences	Watching animations/ dancing/ finding sounds on the board
Supported writing skill			Fine motor skills	Linguistic	Linguistic	Linguistic
Resources			Play dough	Notebooks/books/ board	Smartboard/notebooks	Overhead projector
Classroom organisation			Individual/ small group	Individual	Individual	Whole group

Table 5. 1: Comparison of observed classrooms

Each of the themes relates to particular entries in the observation schedule of the study. I gathered together all of the observational data related to each theme, and made a table for each classroom. Then, I examined all of the classrooms' data together in order to identify whether there were any differences or similarities between pre-school and primary school teaching practices. The findings of the observational data are presented in the next section.

Theme label	Explanation
Writing activity	Relates to writing activities taking place in the classroom during observations.
Writing skill	Relates to aspects of children's early writing skills which are supported with activities by the teachers.
Resources	Relates to resources used by children and/or teachers during writing activities
Classroom organisation	Relates to the teachers' organisation of the classroom into individual, group or whole classroom activities.
Teaching approach	Relates to teachers' ways of supporting children on the way to becoming writers

Table 5. 2: Coding frame of observation analysis

5.2 PRE-SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

5.2.1 Classroom Context

In order to understand the writing context of each classroom, a brief description of the environment is necessary. In pre-school A there were 13 children – one of them had a speech disorder, and one of them had attention deficit disorder, and they needed special care in the classroom that I observed. Another student was from another country, so she had Turkish as a second language. One teacher and one assistant were working in this classroom. The classroom had a computer, a projector, a board, a closet for each child to put their belongings, group tables with chairs, and different

centres for children, such as a book centre, art centre, music centre and toy centre. In the classroom, the names of these centres were written on the walls, numbers were written in different places, and the names of seasons were written on the wall (Appendix 4.a). There were children's books on a bookshelf; these had obviously been read several times, however they were not in any order.

In pre-school B there were 13 children in the classroom, the same as pre-school A. There were no children with special needs or who had Turkish as a second language. There was one teacher and one intern working in this classroom. The only difference with pre-school A was that the classroom had a smartboard.

In pre-school C there were 12 children, and again there were no international children or children with special needs in the classroom. There was only one teacher, and no assistant or intern. The facilities in the classroom were the same as the others, but the classroom was a little bigger. This meant that the smallest group had the most space, which was simply a random variation.

The teachers in this study each practised and supported early writing in their own ways, and the purpose of this dataset is to reveal these differences, focusing on the field notes and video recordings.

5.2.2 Writing Activity

A common feature amongst all three of the teachers was their account of the writing activities which took place in the classroom. They had almost the same opportunities, even within the constraints of their school environments and the different socio-cultural contexts, yet they supported the early writing development of young children in a variety of ways.

During the first week in which I observed the classrooms, the teachers prepared activities around painting, sticking pieces together with glue, rhythmic counting, writing numbers, making lines with a pencil and paper, and discussing with children the beginning sounds of words. At the beginning of each activity, the teachers initiated a conversation about what was going to be done and what kind of materials they were going to use during the activity. This conversation with the children helped them to use their prior knowledge of the subject, and make a link between this prior knowledge and the activity. In this sense, it can be seen that there was a high level of communication between the teachers and the children. Although the teachers supported early writing

development with talking, the variation between the teachers' practices was evident. For example, there were some teachers who talked with the children one to one, so each child had a chance to express themselves; others were more concerned with the activity, or talked with the children only when they had a question.

After beginning the activity, the teacher and/or the assistant or intern helped the children when they needed it. After completing the activities, they checked the children's work and wrote down their names on the pages if applicable. Although the teachers did not teach anything related to writing letters or making letter-like shapes, it seemed that they were supporting the children to prepare them for the primary school phase through these activities in the classroom. The observational data also indicates that by getting involved in different activities, students in the classroom progressively developed their foundational writing skills.

In the second week, along with the activities mentioned in the first week, it was interesting that in school B the teacher explained to the children where to use 'full stops' in sentences and why this punctuation mark was used, and asked the children to show examples of 'full stops' in their books. Although it was not written in their lesson plans, and normally the teachers had a tendency to teach punctuation after beginning the teaching of letters, this teacher aimed to develop an awareness of punctuation marks.

More specifically, the observations indicate that teachers supported early writing development in the classroom through a range of different activities. These activities included art activities, such as painting and creating shapes by sticking pieces together, mathematics activities, such as writing numbers on paper, linguistic activities, such as riddles and finger games, and writing activities, such as making lines and teaching beginning and ending sounds to develop phonological awareness. Here, I must emphasise that phonological awareness is distinct from linguistic activities, as it is accepted as "a part of metalinguistic awareness, including the ability to detect, analyse, and manipulate sounds in oral language. Examples are the ability to rhyme words, to segment words into syllables as well as to blend and delete phonemes" (Kempert, et al., 2016, p. 2). Therefore, it would be possible to stress the activities which highlight the phonetic aspect of linguistic activities.

5.2.3 Supported Writing Skill

The observations showed that the teachers supported the different skills they believe to be foundational for young writers. Through the various activities mentioned above, the pre-school teachers aimed to develop the children's fine motor skills, phonological awareness and linguistic skills.

More specifically, for the three weeks that I observed the classroom, the teacher in school A organised writing activities around fine motor skills. These skills involved learning how to hold a pencil and make shapes as well as writing numbers, which can be seen as important for the automatisisation process of a child's handwriting. Although the children experienced this process in different ways, and were supported in different ways, the teacher usually showed them 'the correct way' to hold a pencil and how to draw lines. Also, through teaching them how to write numbers, there was an opportunity for children to develop their understanding that shapes represent meanings.

In schools B and C, the teachers planned their activities mostly around developing fine motor skills and linguistic skills. The teachers talked with the children about the beginning sounds of words, asked them for any words beginning with a certain sound, and showed them objects beginning with a particular sound, which is important in developing the phonological awareness and linguistic skills of young writers. Also, the teacher from school B included a riddle and finger game as a writing activity, which was useful for children to expand their vocabularies, and to develop their awareness of repetitive sounds and their comprehension skills. Also, in school C, the teacher asked the children to play with dough during the last week of the observations. This started as a free activity in which the children could make any shape with the playdough, but the teacher got involved in the activity from time to time by asking them to make different shapes or numbers, such as a straight line, a circle or a number one or two. It was a good practice not only for the children's fine motor skills, but also for developing their awareness of the different shapes used in writing. This teacher also supported the children with concrete examples when teaching numbers. For instance, when teaching the number four, she gave instructions to the children such as 'skate to the left first, then run towards and jump'. In other words, they were using their bodies to sketch out the shape of a letter. She told me that this made learning easier for children, and developed their cognitive awareness as well as their fine motor skills.

5.2.4 Resources Used in the Classroom

The teachers used different resources during the writing activities in the classroom. My observations indicated that the students in the classroom experienced a range of materials that could be useful for their writing development. In their closets, the children kept their books, crayons, pencils, glue and any painting materials.

For hard resources, the teachers used worksheets and books during the observations for different purposes. The children's books involved a variety of activities such as drawing, painting, writing numbers, cutting shapes into pieces, sticking pieces together and making lines, which supported various different developmental areas for the children on the way to becoming writers. When the teachers believed that the books were not enough for the young writers, or they wanted to do different activities rather than those in the books, they printed out worksheets.

During the observations, only one teacher used the smartboard as an IT resource. She used the smartboard to reflect the book onto the board for all of the children to see, then explained the activities to children through what they could see on the board. She then talked with the children about the activity, and finally asked the children to do the activity independently. She used the smartboard to develop the children's awareness of beginning sounds as well. For instance, she asked the children for words beginning with the sound 'a'. After getting answers from the children, she showed examples on the screen such as 'at' (horse) or 'ayakkabi' (shoes).

Along with the resources mentioned above, the teachers gave opportunities to the children to use other sources such as glue, crayons, playdough and anything that could be found in the classroom. These materials were used mostly to develop the children's fine motor skills.

5.2.5 Classroom Organisation

The observations showed that the teachers organised the classrooms in different ways. In all of the classrooms observed during this study, there were tables for six to eight children to use. The children shared these tables in all of the activities, and they sat together. However, depending on the activity taking place in the classroom, the teachers organised them in different ways.

For a whole group activity, the teachers created one large table by bringing all of the separate tables together, and this enabled all of the children to sit together. In this way,

it was possible for the children to share their activities with each other, and to see what the others did during the activities. This develops the children's awareness of differences, different ideas, how to communicate with each other in more involved ways, and how to help each other at any time. The teachers organised the classrooms with separate tables for group and individual activities, and they placed the children at certain tables. Sitting together allowed the children to feel more comfortable and more willing to share their work with others. Also, it enabled the teachers to guide the children in a more efficient way, as they could see what the children in the group were doing at the same time as showing one child how to do an activity, which helped the other children to understand the process.

5.2.6 Teaching Approach

The observational data indicates that the teachers used different teaching approaches in their classrooms. Even though it was not easy to distinguish the approaches from each other, I categorised them into two groups, modelling and guiding, which were discussed in Section 3.4.4 – Good Early Years Practice.

In one of the classrooms, the teacher used a mixed approach of both modelling and guiding. In some activities, she first modelled the work on the board for all of the students to see, and then asked the children to do the same or a similar thing with their materials. For instance, in the first week of the observations, she brought in a worksheet which featured a model of a torch made with different colours and glued handcrafted papers. She showed the children how to make the different parts of the torch and which colours to use. After the children began to work on the worksheets, she and her assistant checked the children regularly and guided them when necessary.

In the other two classrooms, it can be seen that the teachers did not use any modelling to show the children how to do activities. They explained what was going to be included in each activity at the beginning, and then encouraged the children to do the activities on their own. The classrooms were not structured at all, and the children were able to talk to the teacher or each other any time they needed, so they were more independent than those in the other classroom.

While there were many similarities in the activities, skill development and pedagogical approaches, the key differences between the three classrooms were how the teachers approach writing and how they support it with activities and resources.

5.2.7 Lesson Plans

This part of the analysis included what the teachers called ‘achievements’, which enabled them to follow the children’s development, and could be described as their goals for the year. I did not analyse the activities which took place in the classrooms as I made my observations, and have further analysed the data coming from the observations. Also, it was more reasonable to focus on the underlying reasons why the teachers chose a certain activity, and thus provide relevant research data. Focusing only on those aspects in the lesson plans relevant to early writing, I aimed to understand the teachers’ knowledge and views on early writing in relation to early writing development and classroom practices.

At the beginning of the analysis, I coded similar achievements into concepts, then picked similar concepts under a tentative theme. After reading all of the lesson plans and choosing what was related to early writing and the goals of the teachers, three categories emerged:

- a. Socio-cultural development
- b. Linguistic development
- c. Cognitive development

I developed a scheme to explain the aims these teachers had to support the children’s writing throughout the year, and to show how they planned to support these early writing skills and development (see Table 5.3). With this approach, it was possible for me to follow how the teachers expected the young writers to develop from the beginning of the year to the end, and which skills the children were encouraged to develop in the pre-school phase before the transition to primary education. All of the pre-school teachers involved in this study planned their activities based on the same achievements, using the guidance of the national curriculum. In the data below, the words in italics are the words of the pre-school teachers, as reported in their lesson plans.

Socio-cultural Development

The analysis of the pre-school lesson plans indicates that the teachers planned their writing activities around the socio-cultural development of the young children. The findings in terms of achievements under this theme in relation to classroom practices are discussed closely in this section.

The analysis of the lesson plans indicates that the pre-school teachers referred to their aims for early writing related to socio-cultural practices in their lesson plans. They mentioned in their monthly plans that they expected the children to develop relevant skills in response to certain activities, and I coded the expected achievements of the children into three groups: a) communication, b) self-expression, and c) meaning-making. This shows how pre-school teachers implement activities that reflect socio-cultural practices, and support young writers with relevant activities.

Achievements			Months									
			Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Socio-cultural Development	<i>Communication</i>	Children use language to communicate.	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Self-expression</i>	Children can express what they see/hear in many ways.		√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√	√
	<i>Meaning-making</i>	Children can read the visual materials.		√	√			√	√	√	√	√
Linguistic Development	<i>Sentence construction</i>	Children can construct sentences based on syntax.		√		√	√	√		√	√	
	<i>Vocabulary</i>	Children develop their vocabulary.		√	√	√	√			√	√	√
	<i>Reading awareness</i>	Children show awareness of reading.				√	√		√	√	√	
	<i>Writing awareness</i>	Children show awareness of writing.				√	√	√	√	√	√	
	<i>Grammar</i>	Children use grammar when talking.			√		√	√	√		√	
Cognitive Development	<i>Phonological awareness</i>	Children can distinguish sounds.		√	√	√	√		√		√	
	<i>Phonological awareness</i>	Children show phonological awareness.		√	√	√	√	√			√	
	<i>Comprehension</i>	Children understand what they see/hear.	√	√	√	√		√	√	√	√	√
	<i>The use of sound</i>	Children can use their voice appropriately.		√	√	√	√					

Table 5. 3: Pre-school teachers' lesson plans for monthly language development achievements, used to design activities in the classroom

The teachers commented in the lesson plans on the importance of language as a communication tool within the writing and reading activities they had planned, in which they referred to a variety of achievements: *'making eye contact during conversations'*, *'understanding of gestures and mimics'*, *'initiating, maintaining and ending conversations'*, and *'expressing feelings, thoughts and dreams'*. The teachers organised activities around 'communication' during the year, and by the end of the year they expected the children *'to use language to communicate'*. The emphasis was placed on oral rehearsal, and writing was not mentioned as a way to communicate at all throughout the plans. However, it might be that in pre-school classrooms they do not teach children how to write in any formal ways, but they try to improve children's awareness of certain skills which are accepted as foundational for writing development. Therefore, it seems that teachers try to improve children's comprehension of language to form a basis for writing development in the next educational setting – primary education.

Secondly, I coded the writing activities related to the children's skills in talking about themselves as *'self-expression'*, and the achievement that teachers used as a goal in these activities was *'children can express what they see/hear in many ways'*. Under this achievement, the teachers referred to various goals: *'asking questions about what they have seen/heard'*, *'answering questions about what they have seen/heard'*, and *'displaying what they have seen/heard with paintings, music, drama, poetry and stories'*. The pre-school teachers planned to improve the children's understandings of the different ways to express themselves and to communicate their thoughts or feelings with others. With these developments, the teachers planned to support children in their understanding of the fact that people write for different reasons, and there are many ways to show these understandings. The activities related to this achievement began in the second month of the academic year and took place throughout the year. According to the lesson plans, the teachers' aims were for the children to be able to have certain skills in terms of self-expression.

The 'meaning-making' process was also seen as an important part of writing activities in lesson plans, which the teachers called *'children can read the visual materials'*. They expected the children to examine visual materials, explain them, ask questions about them, answer questions about them, and create compositions such as events or stories. The pre-school teachers focused on this achievement especially in the second

term, along with the various activities they planned to do in the first term. It is important in terms of providing a basis for writing awareness to teach children that paintings or photographs can represent views, thoughts or feelings about any subject, and when children begin to write, they can explain these using the alphabetic system.

Linguistic Development

The analysis of the pre-school lesson plans showed that the teachers organised writing activities around linguistic development. I coded the achievements they mentioned into five categories: *sentence construction*, *vocabulary*, *reading awareness*, *writing awareness* and *grammar*. These activities included whole classroom, individual and group activities, and the teachers began to practice them in October, up until the end of the year. The frequency of the achievements they set as goals fluctuated over the year. This fluctuation indicates that the teachers wanted to develop certain skills first, such as the vocabulary of the children, before moving on to other achievements such as writing awareness. These views are reinforced in the writing samples data in Chapter 6.

Under the achievement of 'sentence construction', the teachers supported the construction of plain and inverted sentences (such as 'you will never do that'/'never again will you do that'), negative sentences, questions, compound sentences and the right use of sentence components such as verbs, objects or subjects (see Appendix 4.b). The teachers included sentence-based activities to help the children construct meaningful pieces when writing and expressing themselves in an understandable way.

The teachers referred to the improvement of 'vocabulary' as follows: '*recognising new words and asking their meanings*', '*memorising words and stating their meanings*', '*using the new words in the right place*', '*using plural words when constructing sentences*', and '*using antonymous, synonymous and heteronymous words*'. As can be seen with these achievements, linguistic knowledge was seen as an important part of early writing development and improving children's writing skills in order to get them ready for primary school. By including vocabulary building as part of their classroom practices, the teachers also supported the sentence construction skills of children. For instance, the students in the classroom might be asked to talk about a picture shown by their teacher.

With '*reading awareness*' in the classroom activities, the teachers aimed to develop the following: *children talking about what are the written materials in the environment*,

asking the adults to read a book, imitating reading and explaining why it is important to read in our daily lives. With an increased awareness of reading, it was hoped that the children might improve their phonological awareness. Although reading and writing awareness are given as two different achievements, in fact, in pre-school and primary classrooms in Turkey, reading and writing are seen as integrated skills. In the next section on primary lesson plans, it can be seen that the teachers tried to develop both skills simultaneously. It can also be seen in the achievement of 'writing awareness', whereby the teachers mentioned that the children were made aware of the following: *'written materials around them', 'showing punctuation', 'showing the direction of the writing', 'asking an adult to write about their thoughts and feelings', and 'explaining why writing is important'*. With written materials in the classroom, it was intended that the children would develop print awareness which might affect both their reading and writing awareness. Also, when asking an adult to read for them, they might come to understand the direction of the writing, and where it begins and ends.

In the pre-school classrooms involved in this study, it was planned to teach *'grammar'*. However, this is not about distinguishing and naming objects, verbs or adjectives, but using different grammatical structures which were mentioned in the lesson plans, such as *nouns, verbs, adjectives, conjunctions, plurality, adverbs, pronouns, prepositions* and *negative structures*. Once more, it can be indicated that all of the codes mentioned under linguistic developments are linked to each other. Teaching grammatical structures was included in the teachers planning, with the aim of improving the children's awareness of different units in a language. In the lesson plans, the teachers introduced more activities in the second term; however, they did not focus on grammar throughout the year. It seems that they just wanted the children to be aware of grammatical structures when they transitioned to the primary classrooms; however, they did not think that it was their job to teach this, which is a viewpoint that appears in the interview data reported in Chapter 7.

Cognitive development

A variety of activities were planned by the teachers to support the children's cognitive development related to early writing. The achievements mentioned in the lesson plans referred to *'phonological awareness', 'comprehension' and 'the use of sound'* when supporting writing development in early years classrooms.

The teachers wanted the young children in their classrooms *'to tell where the sound comes'*, *'from where the sound comes'*, *'the features of the sound'*, *'similarities and differences between sounds'* and *'to imitate sounds'*, describing the goal as *'children can distinguish sounds'*, and I gathered these achievements under *'phonological awareness'*. Also, the teachers organised activities to support the children to *'show phonological awareness'*, which they referred to as *'telling the beginning and ending sounds'*, *'producing words with beginning and ending certain sounds'*, and *'telling rhymes in poems, stories and tongue twisters'*. These activities were important for the children to understand the relationship between sounds and letters, and that words are created by using sounds. The teachers aimed to improve this awareness by focusing on vowels, but throughout the lesson plans there were no activities with consonants.

Even though *'the use of sound'* is directly related to early writing development, as children use sound-letter correspondence in writing as well as reading, it was mentioned in the plans that it is likely to support achievement in writing activities in a range of different ways. The teachers referred to *'the use of breath'*, *'tone of voice'*, *'pace of voice'* and *'volume'* in order for children *'to use their voice appropriately'*. Thus the practices observed in these pre-school classrooms indicated an intention to develop language skills and provide opportunities for speaking as an important step in the children's writing development.

5.2.8 Summary

A comparison between what the different teachers did during the observations and the findings of the analysis of the lesson plans in relation to early writing development indicates a level of consistency between them. In particular, the activities reflected the pre-school teachers' intentions.

References made by pre-school teachers in lesson plans were based on a recognition of their being different developmental areas for children, which I have categorised as socio-cultural, linguistic and cognitive. The analysis indicates that the pre-school teachers supported these different developmental areas with a variety of writing activities. The writing activities in the pre-school classrooms varied from art activities to mathematical and linguistic activities, which included making lines, teaching the children how to write numbers, playing with dough, or teaching beginning and ending sounds. This revealed that, to a large extent, their practices reflected their beliefs, as

will be shown in Chapter 6, and that what they plan is in line with their views of how best to support children in developing their foundational writing skills. Fine motor skills were at the centre of the activities, and the resources used during these activities throughout the observations demonstrate this: books, crayons, pencils, worksheets, painting materials and playdough. The children experienced print in the classroom with access to a range of books and learning centres, which helped them to develop their pencil-holding skills. Also, all of the teachers included activities related to children's phonological awareness, such as finding the beginning sounds in words.

The children also had opportunities within small group activities, for instance, to communicate with each other or with the teacher, and this was categorised under socio-cultural development in the lesson plans. The reading and writing awareness of the children were also supported by the surrounding print in the classroom, as well as by the books and IT sources which were designed to support the linguistic development of the children in the lesson plans. Thus the practices evident in these pre-school classrooms suggest a relatively broad understanding of the range of skills that are necessary to support early writing development, and a range of relevant activities were used to develop these skills.

5.3 PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOMS

5.3.1 Classroom Context

Before I started observing the primary school classrooms, I met with the teachers to collect general information about the classrooms, such as writing lesson dates, times, the classroom size, the background of children in the classroom, and which materials they use.

In classroom A there were 41 children in the classroom, 30 of whom had pre-school experience, and there was only one teacher in the classroom. There were no children with special needs, but there was one child from Syria who did not know any Turkish at all. The lessons took 45 minutes, during which children had a five minute break as a school policy – in total, they had six lessons in a day. In this school, double shift schooling was applied, which means that there were two groups of classrooms: one came to school in the morning until the afternoon, and the other group came to school in the afternoon until the evening. The teacher was the key influence on classroom

practice, and planned all of the activities and practices. The classroom was relatively small for 41 students to be taught at the same time; there were desks for two or three children to sit together, and the gap between the desks was narrow. There was no room for children to keep their materials such as books in the classroom, so they had to carry a bag to school every day. There was a computer, a board and a projector in the classroom for use during lessons.

In classroom B there were 38 students in the classroom, 36 of whom had pre-school experience, and there was only one teacher. There were no children with special needs or Turkish as a second language. The lessons took 45 minutes, as in school A, with a five minute break. A teacher-oriented approach was used in this classroom, in which the teacher prepared everything and taught the children using these activities. The classroom size was better than in school A, as there was enough space for the children and the teacher to move comfortably. In this classroom, the children were supposed to sit in a row at their desks with two sharing, as in school A. In this classroom, there was a computer, a projector, a board and a bookshelf to keep the children's books.

In primary classroom C, there were 41 children, 18 of whom had pre-school backgrounds, and again there was just one teacher. Again, there were no children with special needs or Turkish as a second language. The lessons took 45 minutes with a five minute break, just as in the others. The teacher was responsible for preparing activities, and the children were supposed to follow the teacher; however, the children in this classroom were freer than in the other classrooms. For example, the children were allowed to go to other classrooms, be involved in any groups, or walk freely any time they needed. There was a board, a projector and a bookshelf, as in other classrooms, but the teacher brought her own computer for when she needed to use it in the classroom. There were desks, and children had to share their desks with another student as well as sitting in a row. The teacher had a desk in front of the classroom, which she used a lot to sit and check the children's work.

5.3.2 Writing activity

In the first week of school, as was written in the lesson plans, making lines and painting activities took place in all three classrooms. The teachers wanted the children to paint certain pages in the books, or they asked children to make straight, circular, wavy and oblique lines in their notebooks. Activities of this kind offered a degree of continuity

with the approaches taken in the pre-schools. One of the teachers showed the children a short video on the smartboard exemplifying how to make the lines. The teachers drew some examples on the children's notebooks, and they checked each child one by one to see how they engaged in this activity. This week was seen as an orientation period for the children to adapt to formal schooling.

After this orientation period, two teachers began to teach the children how to write the 'e' sound in both lower and upper cases. The teacher from primary school A asked the children to write 'E' in their notebooks after showing an example on the board and checking the homework that she had given the day before related to the children writing 'e' in their notebooks. During the activity, she checked each child, and helped them to write the sound in the notebook in the right way. After finishing this activity, she asked the children to paint the pictures of the animals and fruits in their workbooks which begin with the sound 'e'. She gave a star sticker to the students who completed their work. The teacher from primary school B prepared various activities by using the smartboard. To raise the children's awareness of the sound 'e', he showed the children several words on the board and asked where the sound was: in the beginning, middle or at the end? He also asked how many 'e' sounds the children saw in the sentence. He supported this activity by teaching the children a song about the 'e' sound, and they watched an animation on the smartboard about this sound. Through a combination of different activities, the teacher in class B supported the children's early writing development in a more integrated way than the other teachers. On the other hand, in classroom C, when I arrived there in the second week, the teacher had already taught the children how to write the 'e, l, a, t, n' sounds in both upper and lower cases. The children knew how to write these letters, but did not know what they represented. The teacher commented on this, saying that she always teaches her students how to write letters as shapes in the first place, but not which sounds they represent. She thought that in this way she could improve the children's pre-writing skills first, before concentrating on their cognition of the sounds. She modelled where to begin and end writing the sounds on the board, then asked the children to write the same shapes in their notebooks. Like other teachers, she helped the children when they needed support, and checked everyone in the classroom one by one.

In the following weeks, the teachers prepared similar activities with other sounds such as 'l and a', and they taught the children how to combine sounds to create words and

sentences. The teachers wrote various words with combinations of these sounds on the board, or displayed words on the smartboard, then asked the children to read them. Whenever they taught a sound to children, they taught it in both upper and lower cases. They gave children a lot of homework and supported their activities with the use of computers, projectors or smartboards.

5.3.3 Supported Writing Skill

The primary school teachers supported early writing skills with the activities mentioned above. They began with fine motor skills, including pencil holding skills and eye-hand coordination, which facilitated the orientation process, especially for children coming from the pre-school environment. When they began to do the activities designed to teach sounds, they supported the children's phonological awareness and their understanding that letters represent sounds. Also, through creating words with sounds and reading them, they supported the children's reading skills along with their early writing skills. Besides, linguistic skills were at the centre of the activities, and the teachers focused on the product more than the writing process. For instance, they were careful about how to write letters and how to combine them in cursive scripts. The beauty of handwriting was important for the teachers as well. When they checked the children's writing samples, they focused on the characteristics of the handwriting.

5.3.4 Resources Used in the Classroom

The teachers mostly used notebooks to teach the children how to write, but they also used books, worksheets, the smartboard, computers and the board to support the children. I grouped these as hard resources and IT resources, and did not include any other resources here, as I did not observe any other resources being used during the observations.

As in the pre-school setting, there were books, worksheets and notebooks used as hard sources in the classroom practice. The books included activities showing the children how to make lines, how to write letters, beginning and ending sounds, and words and sentences combined with certain sounds. It was easy for the children, teachers and families to follow the books throughout the year. The teachers supported these activities with a worksheet when they thought it was necessary. Keeping a notebook was seen as important, as it enabled the teachers to see the children's development over time.

In this phase, the teachers used IT sources such as smartboards, computers and projectors more than the pre-school teachers, and in different ways. With the help of IT resources, they showed letters, played games which involved finding the letters or finding objects beginning with certain sounds, watched animations, and taught the children songs about sounds.

5.3.5 Classroom Organisation

In all three primary classrooms, the teachers organised their classrooms in the same way. Two students shared one desk, and there was no table for group work. The classrooms which had about 40 children in each did not have enough space for all of the children to move freely. However, it was possible to create a bigger space by pushing the desks together, and there were other possibilities to create sufficient space for whole classroom activities. Nevertheless, the teachers planned their activities mostly based on individual practices by asking the children to do activities on their own. It could be seen as a burden for the teachers to organise their classrooms in different ways, especially at the beginning of the year when they did not know the students well and the students were not used to being in formal schooling. However, the teachers might have viewed changing their normal practices as resulting in a loss of time for formal teaching, and might not have seen any benefit in organising their classrooms in a different way. Also, the primary teachers in the study did not comment on the possibility of doing whole class or group activities in either the interviews or the focus group, which can be seen as supporting this argument.

The students in these classrooms sat at their desks in groups of two to three, which was useful for them to share their work with their peers, although the activities were mostly designed as individual tasks rather than group tasks. As the teachers checked each students' work in the classroom during the activities, it was also useful for the teachers to show examples to two students at a time in a crowded classroom, rather than only one. Also, it was possible for children to communicate what they wrote on the paper with each other, which could develop their understanding of writing as a means of communication in spite of the limited opportunities for planned group work. On the occasions when the teachers did plan an activity with small groups, they asked the children to come to the board in groups and do what the activity required. In this way, they made group work possible in spite of the difficulties involved in working in confined spaces.

5.3.6 Teaching Approach

The observation data indicates that the primary teachers used modelling and guiding in the classroom with a specific focus on the writing skills of children, which could be seen as highly traditional.

When the teachers began their activities in the classroom, they asked the children to sit still, not to make any noise, and to listen to their teacher carefully. Then, the teachers talked about the topic and the activity, which they supported by asking the children questions from time to time, and choosing a child who had to reply. After teaching a topic using different techniques, they asked the children to do the activity on their own. For instance, after teaching the 'e and l' sounds to the children, the teacher from school B told the students in the classroom that they could combine these sounds in different ways to create words. He gave some examples, and asked the children if they could provide any more examples. Then, he wrote the words onto the board and asked the children to write them in their notebooks. After the children began writing, he checked each child's work to see if they were writing in the correct way. He told me that it was important to support children's handwriting in the first place, as if they did not learn how to write with readable and beautiful handwriting, it would be really difficult for them to correct it later. It can be understood from this comment that they focused on writing outcomes during my observations.

5.3.7 Lesson Plans

I collected the primary school lesson plans from the observed classrooms, which were organised weekly for the whole academic year. There was a class called 'Turkish lesson' in the plan, which involved listening, speaking, writing and reading skills. In the scope of this study, it was not possible to analyse all of the weekly plans and all of the areas for all three classrooms, as this led to a huge amount of data. Therefore, I reduced the plans to the achievements cited by the teachers for each activity related to writing, and I decided to analyse them as the orientation stage (two weeks at the beginning of the academic year), first term (September to January) and second term (February to June), which allowed me to see the timeline of the writing activities and how they planned for the children's development over time, and what they achieved at the end of the year in terms of early writing development (see Table 5.4).

Developmental area of children	Achievements emphasised in plans	Timeline		
		Orientation	First Term	Second Term
Fine motor development	Free line-making work	****		
Cognitive and linguistic development	The detection and recognition of sounds		****	
Linguistic development	Reading and writing sounds and letters		****	
Linguistic development	The construction of text		****	
Linguistic development	The construction of syllables, words and sentences with sounds/letters		****	
Linguistic development	The application of writing rules			****
Socio-cultural development	Expression of the self through writing			****
Socio-cultural and linguistic development	Writing with consideration of genre, methods and style			****

Table 5. 4: Primary school yearly lesson plans

Orientation Period

At the beginning of the year, the teachers planned the reading and writing lessons as an orientation stage for two weeks. In this period, the writing activities included free-line works, which enabled the children to do different activities such as drawings, paintings, making shapes on paper and on the board, and using beans. This period ensured the continuity of experience for the children who had transitioned from pre-school and for the other children who did not have any pre-school experience, and it was treated as a warm-up period.

It was indicated in the lesson plans that in the orientation stage the children were expected to adapt to the formal school environment, which involves scheduled lessons, sitting at desks in rows, and different rules within the classroom and the

school than was the case in pre-school. As there were children with different backgrounds in the classrooms, such as children with and without pre-school experience, or children with Turkish as a second language, it is an important period for children to orientate themselves and for teachers to get to know the children and learn their skills, abilities, personalities and backgrounds. In terms of writing, the teachers tried to improve the children's pencil-holding skills, which can be described as a fine motor skill. Also, the children experienced print in a variety of ways, and for the children without pre-school experience this was maybe occurring for the first time in their lives. They had books, notebooks, and written signs everywhere in the school. This indicates that primary teachers see the value in a preparatory process when beginning to teach children how to write. In addition, by improving the fine motor skills of young children the teachers aimed to support the automatisisation process, which has an important place in fluent writing. However, it may be that the tendency to move children at the same pace and to move all children very quickly onto formal writing instruction may be too hasty, and may be more motivated by a focus on progress than on an understanding of early writing development, or the needs of individual children.

Beginning primary school is an important milestone for children, which can be regarded as a new phase of school life. A well-reviewed orientation process can help with children's continuity in terms of learning and development, can enable them to overcome negative feelings towards schooling such as insecurity or a lack of confidence, and can connect them to their new environment. In this study, even though this brief orientation period had some similarities with the pre-school experience, it did not fully reflect the pre-school setting, which included playing games most of the time, the freedom to walk around or talk with teachers, or sharing their activities with their peers.

First Term

After the orientation period, the primary school teachers began to teach sounds one by one to the young children during the first term, as was written in the lesson plans. Certain sounds were grouped together to be taught at a particular time, so that the children could construct words and sentences with these sounds. For instance, they start with the sounds 'e', 'l', 'a' and 't'. First of all, they learn the relationship between the sounds and letters, then how to write and read these letters, and the words that

can be constructed with these sounds, such as 'el', which means 'hand' in Turkish. After each sound was taught in the classroom, they continued to produce different words by combining them with the previous sounds learned.

The primary school teachers categorised what they wanted to achieve in four groups in their plans: *'the detection and recognition of sounds'*, *'reading and writing the sound or letter'*, *'the construction of text'* and *'the construction of syllables, words and sentences with sounds or letters'*. Each week, with each activity, they set the aims and achievements that they wanted to reach. Also, they made connections between the writing activities and other activities, such as science or history lessons. As an example, the children firstly observed nature, recognised the differences in nature, and then described it in oral and written ways. I categorised the developmental areas that the primary school teachers supported within the classroom, and filed the achievements under these areas. This indicates that the primary school teachers observed in this study focused on the linguistic aspects of early writing development. Especially in the first term, with sufficient fine motor skills, they began to teach the children how to write by paying more attention to the product of the writing process, and there was less focus on the socio-cultural aspects of writing in primary school. This was in contrast to the broader approach taken in the pre-school setting.

The first group of achievements, which the teachers called *'the detection and recognition of sounds'*, involves improving certain skills of young writers: *'distinguishing the sounds he or she hears'*, *'matching the sounds he or she hears with letters'*, *'paying attention to what he or she hears'*, *'improving his or her vocabulary by using visual materials'*, *'interpreting paintings and photographs'*, and *'understanding colours and interpreting them'*. The teachers focused on sound-based activities during the first term by writing lesson plans that focused especially on these achievements, which aimed to develop the phonological awareness of the children, and their vocabulary. Through using visual materials such as paintings or photographs and asking the children to interpret them, it was possible to develop the children's understanding that symbols involve meanings. Also, understanding the letter-sound relationship is an important step for children when learning how to write.

The second group of achievements, *'reading and writing the sound or letter'*, focused on *'making sense of what is read by using prior knowledge'*, *'using visibility to make*

sense of what is read, *reading with an audible voice*, *reading with guidance*, and *writing cursive scripts within its rules*. This indicates that reading and writing are seen as integrated processes, and the primary school teachers aimed to support both writing and reading simultaneously. Also, the children were expected to make a connection between their prior knowledge and what they had recently learned, which was shown as an aim by the primary school teachers in their lesson plans.

The construction of text, which is the third group of achievements, is the most mentioned achievement group throughout the lesson plans, and it emphasises linguistic features more than others: *paying attention to page layout and being clean*, *correct pronunciation of words*, *listening to the text through following it (in the book)*, *reading with attention given to punctuation marks*, *reading by looking at the sentence or text given*, *writing by looking at the sentence or text given*, *expressing sentences through visual objects*, *writing meaningful and grammatically correct sentences*, *from the visuals, constructing sentences and texts*, and *writing everything in cursive scripts*. The teachers expected the children to write in correct forms and aimed to develop the children's handwriting through this group of achievements in the first term of the academic year. As is shown in the next section, after an emphasis on the development of phonological awareness and linguistically correct sentences, they then focused on what I identified as the socio-cultural development of early writing, such as genre, the style of text, and writing as a communication tool, which also appeared in the pre-school teachers' lesson plans as communication, self-expression and the meaning-making process. However, the children's understandings that writing has a purpose were mainly supported in this later phase. For a time, therefore, writing in the primary school context appears to be primarily seen in terms of transcription and the coding and decoding of the phonological system, and this is in contrast to the broader understanding visible in the pre-school setting. Thus some of the broader learning experience evident in the pre-school setting may not be effectively transitioned into the primary school context.

In the last group of achievements, the teachers organised their plans around *the construction of syllables, words and sentences with sounds or letters*. In this group, the aims include *matching the words heard with visuals and symbols*, *spacing between words, sentences and lines*, *reading syllables with sounds, words with*

syllables, and sentences with words’, and *‘writing syllables with sounds, words with syllables, and sentences with words’*. Overall, this group shows how teaching children to write happens in the classrooms. It is an inductive approach to teaching children to write, which begins with teaching sounds, going through to words, and finally to sentences. As Turkish is a phonetically transparent language – reading the sounds as they are written – primary school teachers support children’s development of phonological awareness, then, step by step, they teach their students how to construct text. At the end of the first term, in the lesson plans, the teachers expected the children to be able to write and read all of the sounds, construct words and sentences, and understand what is written or read. There were no individualised plans for any of the children, and all of the children, without considering any different abilities within the group, were expected to progress at the same pace.

Second Term

In the second term, the teachers planned to support early writing development around three themes: a) *the application of writing rules*; b) *expression of the self through writing*; and c) *writing with consideration to genre, methods and style*. They set similar achievements as were seen in the pre-school phase and in the first term of primary school. They planned to support the different skills of children and their developmental areas, with each activity taking place in the classroom.

In the first group, *‘the application of writing rules’*, the teachers mostly emphasised the linguistic features of writing development together with cognitive and socio-cultural aspects, and they overlapped with some of the achievements mentioned in the previous section. This group consists of: *‘preparation to write’*, *‘spacing between words, sentences and lines’*, *‘writing everything in cursive scripts’*, *‘writing cursive scripts in correct forms’*, *‘writing mathematical symbols in correct forms’*, *‘writing meaningful and grammatical correct sentences’*, *‘using punctuation marks in the right place’*, *‘applying grammar in writing’*, *‘paying attention to page layout and being clean’*, *‘using a dictionary and spelling book’*, and *‘identifying the subject of writing’*. The teachers included mathematical symbols such as numbers and signs in their writing achievements, which was mentioned by the pre-school teachers when talking about early writing development in the interview data. However, writing mathematical symbols was of less importance for the primary school teachers. Also, at the end of

the second term, the teachers began to ask the children to write about anything they wanted, so that the children could choose topics to write about, which supported an increased amount of attention on the socio-cultural aspects of writing development.

In the second group of achievements, *'expression of the self through writing'*, the teachers focused more on the socio-cultural aspects of writing development: *'using words in the right places and properly'*, *'using new words when writing'*, *'finding a proper title'*, *'writing events based on the times'*, *'giving examples from their own lives'*, *'giving appropriate examples to support and to explain an idea throughout the writing'*, *'making comparisons in writing'*, *'making cause and effect relations in writing'*, *'writing based on experiences'*, *'writing about feelings, thoughts and dreams'*, *'writing about themselves, families and relatives'*, *'writing about interesting characters, events, places and times'*, *'writing agree-disagree texts'*, *'asking questions'*, *'writing what they like or dislike'* and *'emphasising what, when, where, how and why in writing'*. This indicates that the teachers aimed to develop the children's understanding of why they write, which is more associated with socio-cultural aims. Through supporting the idea of writing to communicate their ideas through text, the children became more involved in the process. Also, the teachers aimed for the young children to focus less exclusively on how to write in correct forms, and to begin to develop an understanding of writing itself.

In the last group, *'writing with consideration to genre, methods and style'*, the teachers mentioned *'writing invitations or celebration letters'*, *'writing stories'*, *'descriptive writings'*, *'writing in cooperation'*, *'participation in dictating works'*, *'writing by looking at the sentence or the text'*, *'writing by constructing syllables from letters, words from syllables, and sentences from words'*, and *'being willing to engage in independent writing'*. The teachers supported children gradually to become independent writers, and in this last phase they referred to genre and different kinds of writing such as descriptive writing. At the end of the year, the teachers planned for the children to be able to write independently for different aims in correct forms, and to communicate through their writing.

5.3.8 Summary

The findings from both the classroom observations and the lesson plans of the primary school teachers indicate that they complement and support each other in all

categories, showing overall that the classroom practices were based on the planned activities.

When teaching sounds, they all asked the students to find the beginning, middle and ending sounds in the words or sentences, as well as finding objects beginning and ending with certain sounds. Upper and lower cases of letters and punctuation marks (only full stops and commas) were also introduced by the teachers, following a similar pattern and ordering of this new understanding. This created tension for the teachers in terms of the legibility of the children's handwriting. All of the primary school teachers viewed handwriting as an indicator of 'good writing'. For example, the teachers gave the children homework such as writing out the 'e' sound for two to three pages. Then, they controlled how the students wrote this sound in their notebooks, and evaluated their handwriting. With this instruction, the teachers began to teach the children how to read what is written as well. They combined the taught letters in different ways, and constantly asked the children to read these new combinations. This means that writing and reading skills are seen as co-constructed concepts and as complementary.

The teachers in the primary schools took a modelling and guiding approach, and this can be evaluated as teacher-oriented instruction. The teacher explained the subject, for example sounds, in the first place, and then showed the children how to write it on the board, made samples in the children's notebooks, and then observed them to check if they had any problems writing the sounds. The writing activities also included books and worksheets. This more formal approach can be explained by the over-populated classrooms and the lack of time available to support each child. In a classroom with 42 pupils, having only 45 minutes for writing activities can be problematic, as if one minute was spent with each child, this would fill the entire lesson.

5.4 CONTINUITY FROM PRE-SCHOOL TO PRIMARY SCHOOL

At the pre-school level, there were pre-writing activities which were designed to develop literacy competencies and foundational skills in order to transition children with a set of competencies which can be seen as essential for future academic performance, and also for the primary school phase. Specifically, in terms of continuity from one educational setting to the other, the thing to which the pre-school teachers paid attention was improving the children's fine motor skills, pencil-holding skills, phonological awareness and self-expression. In pre-school, the teachers adopted the role of offering resources to the children, supporting them when needed, and collaborating with parents. However, the lack of communication with the teachers in the primary school led to some challenges for both the teachers and the children, which did not facilitate the transition of the children to compulsory schooling. This might be caused by a lack of institutional support, as the pre-school classrooms in this study were situated in primary schools, which should have increased the levels of communication. However, despite there being no difficulty for the teachers to come together and share their experiences and views of the children, this did not appear to be happening. This might suggest that the idea of the two phases offering continuity of development might not have been fully appreciated at the institutional level. The extent to which the teachers in each phase understood the values and practices of the other setting will be explored in Chapter 7.

In pre-school, activities were mostly based on playing games. However, when children transition to primary school, they experience quite a different environment from the pre-school phase: a formal arrangement of desks, on-desk activities, over-populated classrooms, pressure to learn different subjects, longer hours, and insufficient stimulus. In the pedagogical practices of the primary school teachers in this study, there was an understanding of early writing as the conventional writing behaviours of children, which can be seen as a product-orientated approach or an approach focusing on the legibility of writing, fluency, or the mark-making process, rather than on writing as a process or as a means of sharing ideas and a form of communication. In this sense, the pre-school experience, while limited in terms of any formal teaching of writing, might be richer in terms of presenting writing as a complex activity.

Children in pre-school developed their memory, vocabulary, listening and speaking ability, visual-motor skills, and the knowledge of sounds, fine motor skills and sound

awareness, which can be seen as child-centred and focusing on the needs of children. When these children transition to primary school, conventional writing instruction immediately begins. The primary school teachers were not able to teach in ways that differentiate the children based on their abilities, so they began with line-working activities.

As a result of this study, it can be seen that there is a discontinuity between these two levels of education in terms of early writing skills, which occurs at the level of the pedagogical practices of these teachers. This discontinuity is the result of pre-school and primary school teachers' training, and the traditional expectations of their conceived roles. There were no preparatory activities in pre-school oriented to the transition process, nor for the families. The reason for this might be that there is a formal curriculum in primary education and a discovery-focused curriculum in pre-school education.

CHAPTER 6: LEARNING PROFILES OF YOUNG WRITERS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Four children in each pre-school classroom (12 in total) were observed in their writing activities in pre-school, and then again after their transition to primary school. The analysis of the observations of the focus children during the classroom writing activities, and their writing samples which were collected after each activity, was designed to explore how they responded to the pre-school and primary school settings. These children's writing was analysed in two steps. In the first step, the children's writing samples were analysed inductively, based on their progress over time and the activities completed in the classroom. I used codes to explore the children's writing both individually and as a group from the same classroom. As it was not possible to understand how they were involved in the activity simply by looking at the writing samples, I combined the outcomes of the writing samples with analysis of my observation notes, as well as using video recordings as a backup, which formed the second step of the analysis.

The specific features and themes that arose from the analysis of the children's writing will be discussed in the following sections. Firstly, I will present the data, drawing on the full sample of the focus children to highlight the different writing tasks in which they engaged in each setting, and to indicate how these tasks were undertaken by different students and how the tasks supported their writing development over the time of the observation. Secondly, I will present a detailed tracking of several children from pre-school through to primary school, in order to understand how the process of transition from one style of provision to another impacted on these particular students' responses and development.

6.2 WRITER PROFILES

Descriptions of the 12 pupils selected for this study are given below.

Name	School	Skill level
Ayşe (Girl)	School - A	Average
Aycan (Girl)	School - A	Average
Ahmet (Boy)	School - A	Above average (younger among the focus children in school A)
Ali (Boy)	School - A	Above average
Berrin (Girl)	School - B	Above average
Bahadır (Boy)	School - B	Average
Basri (Boy)	School - B	Below average
Buse (Girl)	School - B	Average
Cihan (Boy)	School - C	Above average
Canan (Girl)	School - C	Average
Cesur (Boy)	School - C	Below average
Ceyda (Girl)	School - C	Below average

6.3 FOCUS CHILDREN IN THE PRE-SCHOOL SETTING

The findings of this analysis highlight the children's writing, and I have categorised the different skills and aspects of writing in both the pre-school and primary school classrooms. There was a need to analyse each writing sample by considering its situational nature, within the specific context of the writing activity which took place in the different classrooms. My aim when analysing the children's work was to look for their responses in both the pre-school and primary school settings, and draw conclusions based on the contribution of these two phases to the children's writing.

I worked as follows: first, I looked at the progression of the children over time from pre-school to primary school with the help of my observation notes, and then I looked at the different skills for which the children were supported with each activity. In the first stage, I traced the skills that could be seen in the writing samples, such as fine motor

skills and drawing skills. In the second stage, I examined my observation notes along with the video recordings, to assess the contribution of the writing activities to the other skills of the children, such as phonological awareness. Finally, I described the children's writing with illustrations of various examples, to frame a whole picture of the focus children across the pre-school and primary school phases.

6.3.1 Fine Motor Skills

The observations and children's writing samples indicated that all of the children were able to use a pencil, write numbers and make lines. However, the analysis revealed wide variations in the children's fine motor skills. Some of the lines which were made during the writing activities were not as straight as they were supposed to be, some circles did not close, and some children were not able to use the lines to make certain shapes. For example, in the first week of the observations, Ayse was supposed to follow the line on the paper to complete the activity. She was able to begin to make lines by following the dashes, but then in some places she couldn't follow them (Figure 6.1).



Figure 6. 1: Ayse's sample of making lines – 1st week

6.3.2 Phonological Awareness

Analysis of the observations indicates that children in this study had phonological awareness (e.g. syllables, rhymes and phonemes) at different levels related to the writing instruction. In other words, different kinds of activity led to different skills being developed, which will be illustrated in the following sections. In general, the children

developed early phoneme-level skills such as identifying the first sound in a spoken word. For instance, in the first week of observations, the teacher asked children to identify the beginning sounds of certain words such as 'ordek', and all of the children in the classroom in pre-school C replied to the teacher in the correct way with the sound 'o'. The children also developed rhyme awareness with the poems, nursery rhymes and riddles which were read aloud in the classroom. I did not observe any activities related to phonological awareness in pre-school A, but this does not mean that there were no activities related to phonological awareness, as there might have been activities completed before the study began, or they might have taken place on other days in the weeks during the study.

In the pre-school classrooms, the children's early word recognition was supported by the surrounding print in the classroom. For example, in pre-school B, the teacher and the children were preparing for the year-end show. The teacher combined letters cut from coloured paper to form a sentence which would be used in the show (see Figure 6.2). In the break, Bahadir in pre-school B and one of his friends were standing in front of the letters, and he told his friend that he knew what was written down. Although he did not know each letter used there, he could recognise the letters which were in his name. Moreover, he was aware that there were letters which represented sounds, which can be used to create words and sentences, as well as making a connection between the letters which appeared in his name and in that piece of text.



Figure 6. 2: Classroom sample from pre-school B – 2nd week

Consequently, it can be seen that some of the children in this study were able to understand that the sounds in spoken words can be represented in print using alphabetic letters, and were able to recognise some of the regular phoneme-grapheme relationships. Thus, although the pre-school teachers claimed that they did not teach writing or reading formally, there is evidence that early writing or reading skills were being learned.

6.3.3 Handwriting

None of the focus children in this study were taught to print during their pre-school education, and this can be seen throughout the writing samples. The justification provided by the teachers was that the curriculum did not allow them to teach children how to write. However, I used the 'handwriting' code to capture information about children's control over the size, shape and orientation when writing numbers and/or lines.

The observations and writing samples showed that 11 of the children were still developing their control over size when taking part in writing activities related to

painting and making lines; they were able to make certain shapes but not in all of the correct forms, and some of children had reverse orientation of shapes and/or writing. For example, Canan wrote the number '7' in the reverse direction, and Cesur and Ali created lines omitting the dashed lines (Figure 6.3).

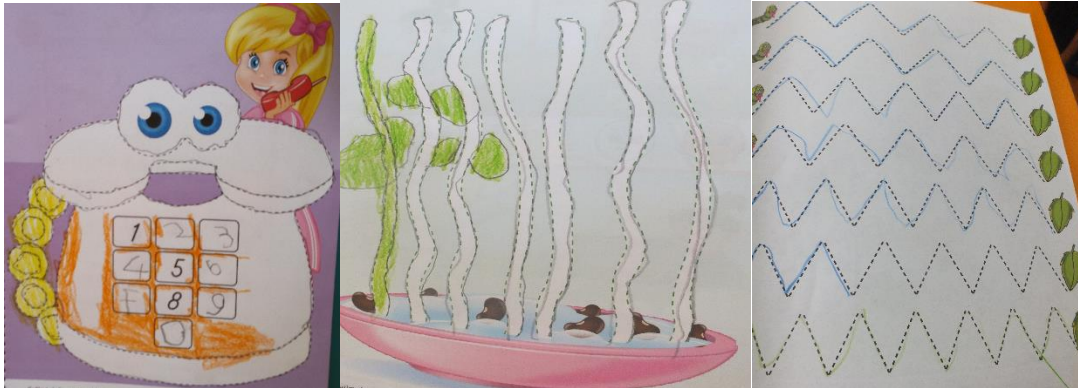


Figure 6. 3: Children's samples from a pre-school classroom

The schools had varying policies using books as a resource in the classroom, but there were similar activities in the books. With these activities, the children were able to recognise letters and words (print recognition), to develop a connection between letters and sounds, to develop their fine motor skills with painting, drawing or line-making activities, to develop their vocabulary with learning different words, numbers and counting, to develop their hand-eye coordination, and to have a space to scribble and learn how to use a pencil, along with the opportunity to develop their social skills through activities in which they worked together with other students in the classroom, to participate in group activities, to communicate with each other and the teacher, and to follow simple directions.

6.3.4 Accompanying Language

The students in the pre-school phase had a great deal of opportunities to talk with each other, to discuss task-related issues, and to express their voices to the teacher, which were all helpful in developing their writing skills. In this respect, children can develop their vocabulary and grammar, and they can prepare their ideas before beginning to write. However, there were wide variations of the language used in the classroom during the writing episodes. Some children were more willing to share their work with others by explaining why they had made certain shapes or lines, or what these shapes meant, while others said very little. For example, Ayse discussed her

friend's writing by asking a question about a shape: 'Why did you do this line here?' The friend told her that she was going to write her name on the page. This represents an understanding of early writing, and that lines, letters, drawings or pictures should reflect something and should communicate a meaning.

6.3.5 Emergent Forms

The analysis of the children's writing samples indicated that emergent forms of writing took place in pre-school classrooms. There were examples of drawing, scribbling, name-writing, an understanding of the direction of written language, and random strings of letters. For example, the teacher asked the children to complete an activity on their workbooks, and Ayse wrote some random letters inside a balloon in the activity (see Figure 6.4). The children's written forms appear as random marks, but as they develop an understanding of the functions of the system, they begin to distinguish between drawing and the letter-like forms that emerge as representations of meaning (Christianakis, 2011). In this manner, this kind of experimentation by children can lead children to produce symbols or letters repeatedly, and children can discover new letters through this experience with signs and symbols.

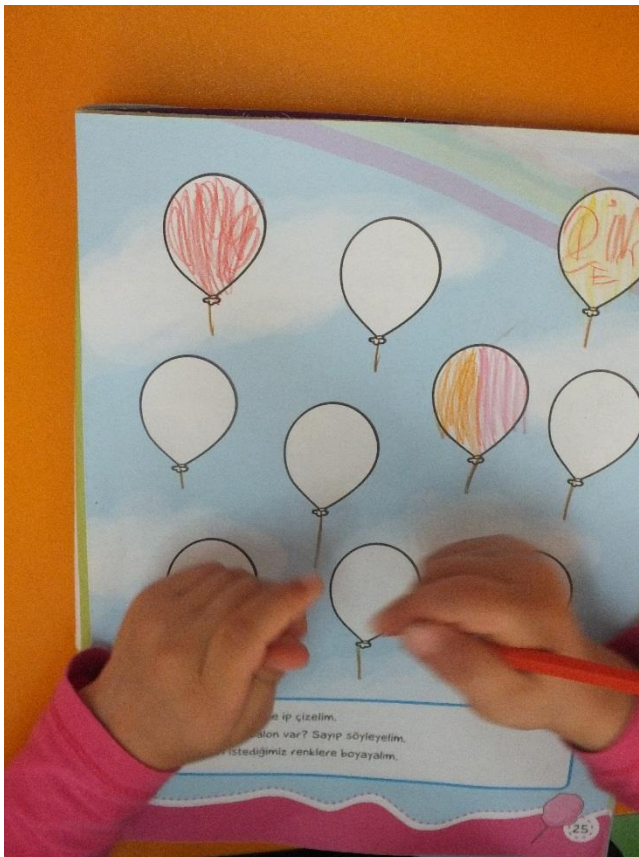


Figure 6. 4: Random strings of letters in Ayse's sample – 1st week

Bahadir drew a picture of his family members in his free time, and then asked the teacher to write about each drawing ('From left to right: the first one is my sister Eda, the second one is me, the third one is mother, the fourth one is father, and the last one is my big sister.'). It can be seen in this drawing that Bahadir had developed an understanding that shapes represent actual words (Figure 6.5). Also, he understood that these drawings could be represented with letters which signify names in a text-based format. It was an example of emergent writing which was supported by the teacher in order to create print awareness for the child.



Figure 6. 5: Bahadir's drawing – 2nd week

6.3.6 Teacher-student Interactions

The observation notes and video recordings highlighted the teacher-student interactions during the writing activities. The pre-school teachers explained how the activity was going to be done at the beginning, showed examples of the activities to the children, continued to speak with the children during the activities, and guided the children whenever necessary. This showed that the interactions between the teachers and the children in the classroom were relatively high. There was a clearly defined writing policy in the classrooms, in which teachers made their decisions about how they would develop the children's writing, as can be seen by the range of different

practices related to writing. It looks to be a very structured writing instruction in contrast to what was claimed by the pre-school teachers, as will be seen in Chapter 7.

There was no evidence of pupils receiving written feedback about the actual writing samples from their teachers in pre-school education.

6.4 FOCUS CHILDREN IN THE PRIMARY SETTING

6.4.1 Fine Motor Skills

At the beginning of the primary school observations, the children were mostly able to make certain shapes which were the result of direct instruction in the primary school classroom. During the first week, there were a variety of writing activities which took place in the primary school classrooms which focused on improving the children's fine-motor skills. All of the children improved their directionality, which influenced their fluency. Also, they used lined-pages in the classroom, which helped the children to use the bottom, middle and top lines correctly when producing lines or letters.

The writing samples from the pre-school setting indicate that the children could already make lines – not exactly those shown in the sample, but it was helpful to create the curved lines. Cesur's development is a typical example that took place during the primary school phase, and it included forming letters and words with the help of strokes, although he had some struggles with consistency. He would often form his letters correctly in the beginning, with the modelling of the teachers, but when working independently he had some difficulties. This can be linked to activities such as painting, making lines and finger games.

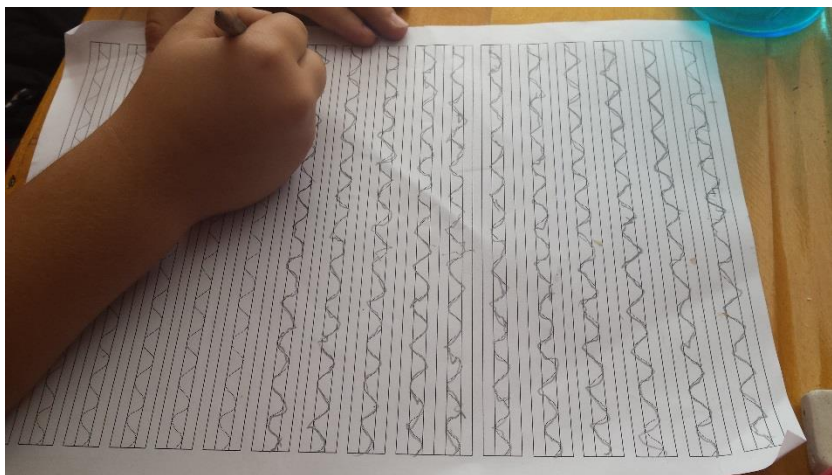


Figure 6. 6: Cesur's writing sample – 1st week

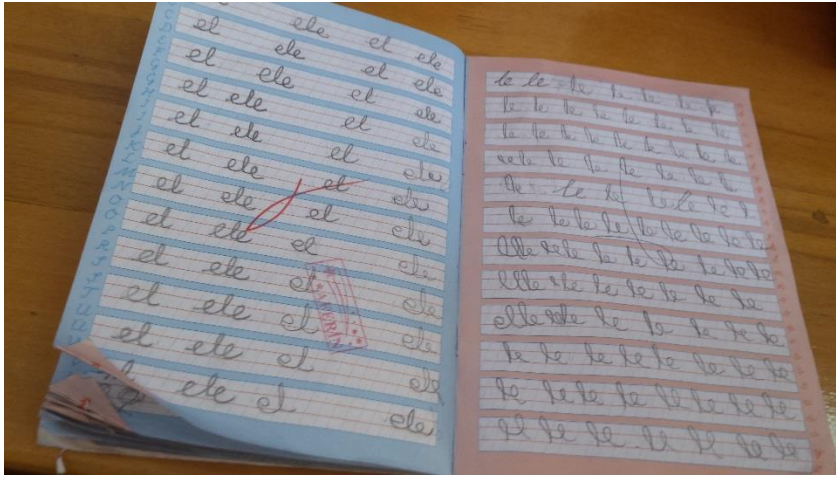


Figure 6. 7: Cesur's writing sample – 3rd week

Hence, the analysis of the writing samples reveals a range of developmental levels based on fine-motor skills, and illustrates how this can vary within and between students.

6.4.2 Spelling

The errors in the children's writing samples provide examples of the developmental stages in learning to spell. Some of the children observed in the study showed rudimentary spelling, which could be outlined in Gentry's pre-phonetic stage. As children are beginning to match phonemes and graphemes, this can be seen as indicative of learning and progress – especially when they are phonologically consistent. As can be seen in Figure 6.8, Cihan produced a piece of writing based on copying the words modelled by the teacher. However, some of the words written on the page were not readable, and indeed Cihan was unable to maintain continuity throughout the page. It can be seen in this example that he could understand that groups of letters represent words, and he knew some of the letters in the alphabet, as they had been taught by his teacher in the classroom. However, it is likely that his phonological skills were limited, as was his ability to apply his knowledge of grapheme-phoneme correspondence. Overall, he produced writing which was constrained by his limited spelling strategies.

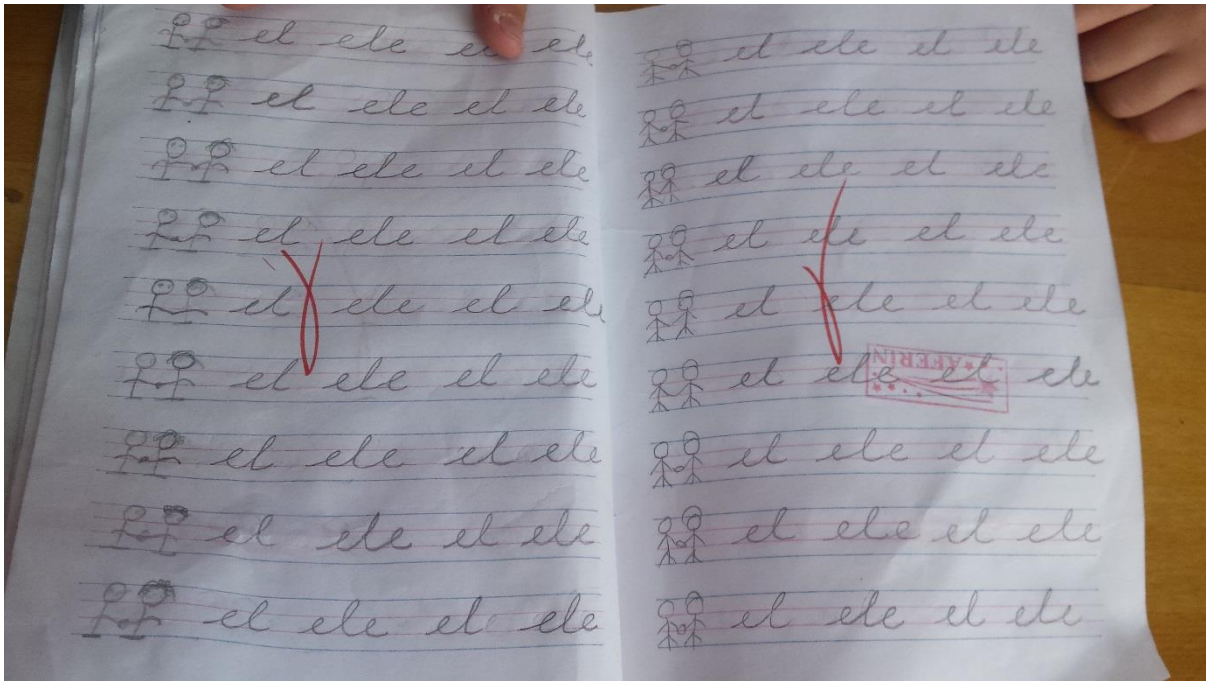


Figure 6. 9: Canan's writing sample – 3rd week

However, the spelling development of children will vary according to the availability of spelling resources. In this study, as there were no activities related to free writing, it was not possible to analyse the proportion of errors. On the other hand, the influence of dialogue associated with spelling is worthy of mention at this point. In response to Ayca's request for the spelling of the word 'Atla', the teacher asked her to look for the word on the board and whether she could recall how to spell it, and Ayca gave a correct response. This can be seen as an example of a teacher intervention that allowed a student to draw on existing knowledge, and it facilitated problem solving. Throughout the activities, all of the teachers in this study guided the children in how to spell certain words through discussions, which shows a willingness to engage in problem solving in collaboration. Accordingly, the potential benefits of using peers as a resource for extending learning can be argued here with these examples, as well as emphasising the constructive, task-focused interactions with the teacher around writing tasks.

6.4.3 Handwriting

All of the children in the study were taught to write in cursive script, and this style can be seen throughout the writing samples. In a move towards developing the cursive

and legible scripts necessary to attain the national curriculum standards, the children were introduced to letters with beginning and exit strokes.

The observations showed that the children established accurate letter formations, which might influence their fluency in their future academic lives (Figure 6.10).

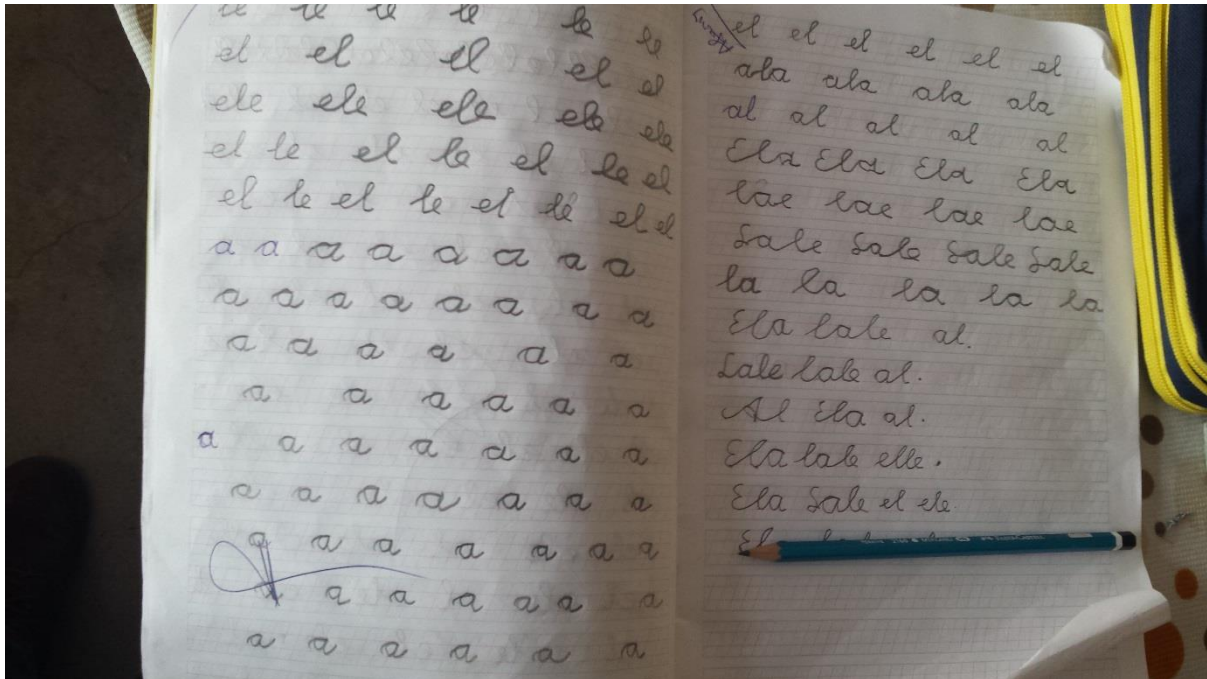


Figure 6. 10: Writing sample of Berrin in the primary phase

In all of the schools, the children had lined-paper notebooks on which to write. Besides, in their workbooks, they had activities with lined pages. This was justified by stating that the children can focus on size and letter formation in the automatization process, and they can benefit from these lines when shaping the letters. When children become more mature and their writing becomes more controlled, they are introduced to less-lined papers and then to unlined ones. This one practice that was applied in all schools reflects the existence of a consensus in the teaching profession about the most appropriate point at which to introduce lined and unlined paper.

Children developed their control over the size, shapes and orientation of writing mainly in the primary phase. They learn where to begin writing, how to continue, how to join the letters to produce words and how to create sentences. After a variety of writing practices in this setting, children increase their fluency of handwriting, which enables them to focus to a greater extent on the compositional aspects of writing, and so affect the overall quality of their written products.

6.4.4 Content

Content analyses of the writing samples show the same features for children from the same primary schools in terms of vocabulary, grammar, structure, organisation and levels of description and detail, as there were no independent writing activities during the observations. However, stimulus conditions, the support available and the resources used in the classroom were not constant across the different classroom observations; therefore, any comparisons would be unreliable. Nevertheless, any differences might be important in interpreting the writing development revealed in these writing samples, and there might be general comments to be drawn out. The children in the study showed the use of simplified language structures through producing basic sentences. These sentences were first taught by the teacher, who then asked children to write down the sentences. For example, Aycan wrote 'Ela lale al' (which means 'Ela, buy tulip'). She did not add any ideas or thoughts to the initial idea, and there were no unusual vocabulary choices or language structures. This kind of sample can be seen as 'copying' rather than representing the self. Examples like this also show the links between the writing samples and the teachers' practices.

6.4.5 Punctuation

The writing samples of the children included very few examples of punctuation. There is evidence that the concept has been introduced, but the children did not have a full understanding of it. For example, Bahadir produced several sentences at the beginning of the page without any punctuation. Then, with the introduction of new letters, the children were asked to produce new words and sentences with different combinations. On the next page, he used a full stop at the end of the two sentences and a comma in one sentence (in the right place). Hence, he appeared to have understood the need to use punctuation in the text to divide his text into meaningful pieces, but did not grasp the appropriate criteria.

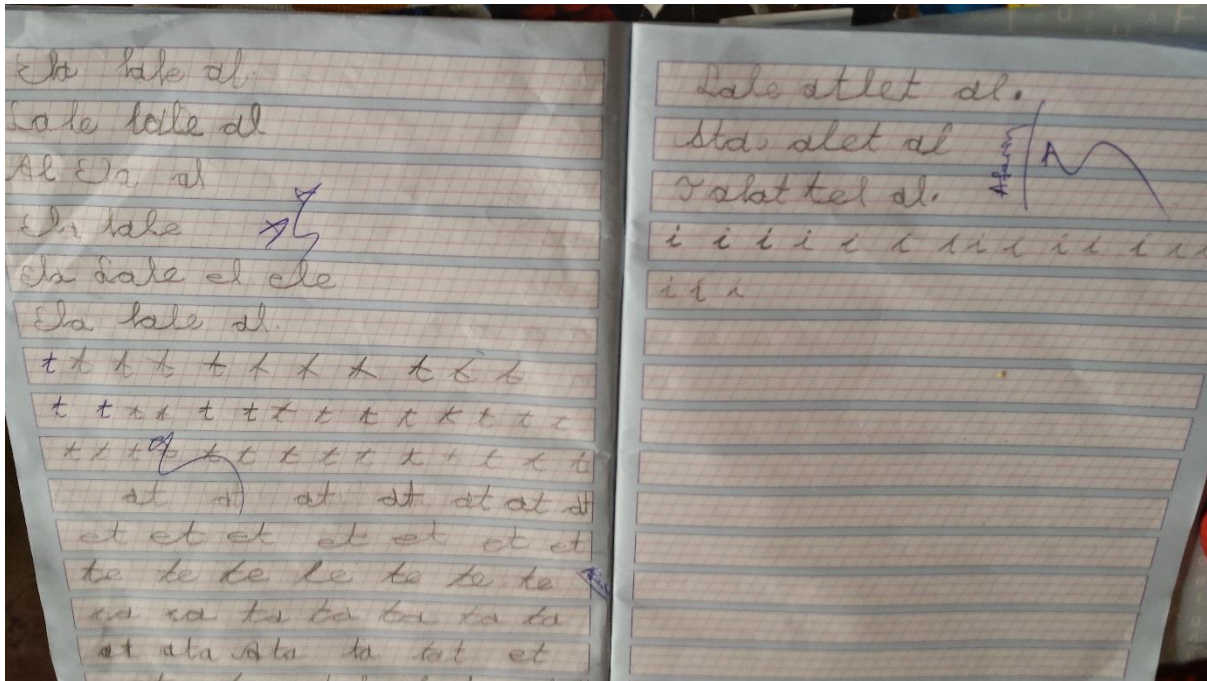


Figure 6. 11: Bahadir's writing sample – 4th week

6.4.6 Teacher-student Interactions

From the social constructivist theory, learning is a dual-agentic process. In other words, through their own perspectives and experiences, the learner and the teacher define the boundaries of the specific context in which they find themselves, and co-construct their learning (Adams, 2007). Within this view, teachers should provide instances for the active co-construction of meaning and understanding. The observations and writing samples in this study indicate that the interactions between teachers and students in relation to writing in the primary school phase were higher than in the pre-school phase. The primary school teachers used open-ended questions to explain to the children a subject that required the students to use skills and apply ideas which employ a variety of communicative methods.

The primary school teachers in the study communicated with the children one by one during each writing activity, they checked the children's homework (if there was any), made examples on the children's notebooks, and showed the children how to write letters, words or sentences on the board. The children were free to ask any task related questions of the teacher at any time. The writing curriculum in this phase was well-organised, so the teachers were able to provide detailed accounts of how writing develops in the early years.

6.4.7 Re-reading the Writing

Spontaneous re-reading of text during writing lessons was observed at some points. The teachers also asked the children to re-read what they wrote aloud, and in most cases they were able to do so. Only in school C was there a different kind of teaching approach to writing (the teacher would teach the children how to write the letters first, and then after teaching a group of letters, she would teach the meaning of the letters), so the children began to re-read their text relatively later than in the other classrooms.

6.4.8 Accompanying Language

The nature and amount of language used in writing lessons varied within and between the classrooms. Some children talked very little (e.g. Berrin and Cesur), yet for others there were incidences of task-focused dialogue with their peers. For instance, Ahmet showed his friend how to make an 'e' in the upper case, saying, 'You should start from right here and finish here.' Cihan's discussions regarding writing mainly concerned the speed of their writing – he was comparing himself with others based on who was going to finish the work first. However, this was not typical in the primary classrooms. The students' discussions around the content of their writing were not observed, which was related to the fact that the teachers did not encourage the children to share their texts with their peers, nor engage in collaborative reviews.

6.5 DEVELOPMENTAL RANGE AND PROGRESSION

6.5.1 Children's Developmental Map

The tables given below highlight the differences between the two settings, and illustrate the general abilities of the children in these two phases. This tells the story of the classroom influence on the focus children (see Table 6.12 and Table 6.13). However, the developmental range of skills demonstrated by the focus children in this research is wide, and the developmental progression shown by the individual children is variable, which is discussed in the next section.

Children/skills	Table 6.12: Writing skills of focus children in the pre-school phase		
	Fine motor skills	Phonological awareness	Handwriting
Ayse	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Writing own name, sometimes with reverse letters/ Reverse numbers/ Writing random strings of letters	Print awareness/ Understanding of letters representing sounds/	Developing control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing
Aycan	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Writing reverse numbers	Print awareness	Developing control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing
Ahmet	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Writing own name	Print awareness/ Understanding of letters representing sounds/	Developing control over size and shape of lines – correct orientation of writing
Ali	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Writing own name reversed/ Writing numbers correctly	Print awareness/ Understanding of letters representing sounds/	Developing control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing

Berrin	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Writing numbers correctly	Print awareness/ Understanding of letters representing sounds	Developing control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing
Bahadir	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Reverse numbers	Print awareness/ Understanding of letters representing sounds	Developing control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing
Basri	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Writing numbers correctly	Print awareness	Developing control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing
Buse	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Reverse numbers	Print awareness	Developing control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing
Cihan	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Writing numbers correctly	Print awareness/ Understanding of letters representing sounds	Developed control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing
Canan	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Writing numbers correctly	Print awareness/ Understanding of letters representing sounds	Developed control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing

Cesur	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Reverse numbers	Print awareness/ Understanding of letters representing sounds	Developing control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing
Ceyda	Using a pencil/ Making certain lines/ Writing numbers correctly	Print awareness/ Understanding of letters representing sounds	Developing control over size, shape and orientation of lines and writing

Figure 6. 12: Writing skills of focus children in the pre-school phase

Children/skills	Table 6.13: Writing skills of focus children in the first year of primary school			
	Fine motor skills	Phonological awareness	Handwriting	Punctuation
Ayşe	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	Using full stops
Aycan	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	Using full stops

Ahmet	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	
Ali	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	
Berrin	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	Using full stops and commas
Bahadir	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	Using full stops

Basri	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	Using full stops
Buse	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	Using full stops
Cihan	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	Using full stops
Canan	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	Using full stops

Cesur	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	Using full stops
Ceyda	Making straight and curved lines	Understanding letters representing sounds/ Matching words with pictures/ Beginning, middle and ending sounds	Writing and compounding letters/ Creating words and sentences/ Spacing between words/ Capital letters	Using full stops

Figure 6. 13: Writing skills of focus children in the first year of primary school

Considering the expected learning development for the students, it was important for this study to look at the skills and learning outcomes of each setting regarding their contents and the way in which these competencies can be achieved. In terms of classroom practices, a play-based approach is emphasised in the pre-school context, which is also consistent with the teachers' views which will be discussed in Chapter 7. However, this approach turns into an outcome-based curriculum in primary education. Despite the common features of these two settings in terms of supporting writing skills such as fine motor skills, handwriting or accompanying language, this change raises questions about continuity during the transition period from pre-school to primary school education, which is also emphasised by a number of scholars (Sink, et al., 2007; Turunen & Maatta, 2012).

In the first year of primary education, there was a different focus to pre-school education, although these two educational settings highlight similar formative areas as guidance for teachers. Therefore, in order to support the early writing skills of children in the classroom, first year primary teachers plan to use different activities for different competencies. In this research, the findings underline the fact that the children experienced a different environment in terms of early writing instruction in primary education when compared to their former pre-school experiences. In this respect, the results provide an important insight into the dramatic shift in curriculum discontinuity. The findings also report that children's writing skills, in this study, were supported in pre-school with 'play'. The pre-school teachers placed a high value on play, and there were no formal requirements for the children to accomplish anything, as there are in the primary context. These differences between the two settings create a so-called curriculum discontinuity in the transition process. This shift can be better illustrated by the pre-school teachers' responses, in which they emphasised that the main role of first grade teachers is teaching children how to write.

The findings of this study show that the pre-school curriculum is not in line with the primary school programme, despite the fact that there are some similarities between these two contexts. Furthermore, teaching in primary school differs from that of pre-school education, leading to a discontinuity not only on the basis of content but also in the teaching-learning process. There were no activities which involved the pre-school children visiting first grade classrooms, and there was a lack of understanding among both groups of teachers in relation to considering teaching activities, or content based

on the pre-school/first grade curriculum. There were also no meetings between pre-school and first grade teachers to talk about the social and academic skills required to prepare children for primary school. All of these considerations led to a discontinuity in the transition in terms of the writing practices in each setting. I'll discuss three of the focus children's progression in order to understand how they responded to the aforementioned shift.

6.5.2 Children's Profiles

In this section, I aim to illustrate my findings by presenting profiles of three of the focus children across the two phases. The purpose of these profiles is to explain how their progress illustrates the pedagogy these children have experienced, and also how they appeared to be influenced by the transition from one context to the other. I have chosen to present the profiles of Buse, Ali and Ceyda. The selection of these particular children's profiles was based on the criterion that these children showed different profiles in the research context and the resulting data. All three children attended different schools in Kayseri, Turkey, which is the city where the study was undertaken. In the following section, I will discuss each child's profile in relation to their progression from the pre-school to the primary school context, and how they responded to these different contexts.

6.5.2.1 Buse's Profile

Buse was described by her teacher as an 'average' writer when the observations began. At the beginning of the study, her writing skills were emergent. For example, it can be seen in Figure 6.14 below that she was able to make lines between objects on the page. What is more important is that in this activity the students were asked to match objects in the first and second group with the same beginning sounds, and to draw a picture of something which begins with the sound 'm'. This shows that Buse had the ability to define the beginning sounds of words, group them together, and match them with other words. The beginning sounds in this activity included 'a, l, t, i, m, r', which illustrates a range of vowels and consonants. She attributed meaning to her own marks or drawings and scribbles; as can be seen in this example, she wrote the letter 'm' in the middle of her drawing, which illustrates her understanding of writing and phoneme-grapheme correspondence. She was able to write on appropriate surfaces and recognise when someone was writing. For instance, she asked me in the

second week of observations about what I was writing when I was taking notes in the classroom. After that, she told me that she asked her mother to write her name on the paper, and then she learned how to write her name. However, I did not observe any name-writing on her activities. However, this does not necessarily mean that she did not know how to write her name. On the contrary, she asked an adult to write it, and copied the letters to create a meaningful word, which reflects her understanding of print, what writing means, and the communicating aspect of writing.

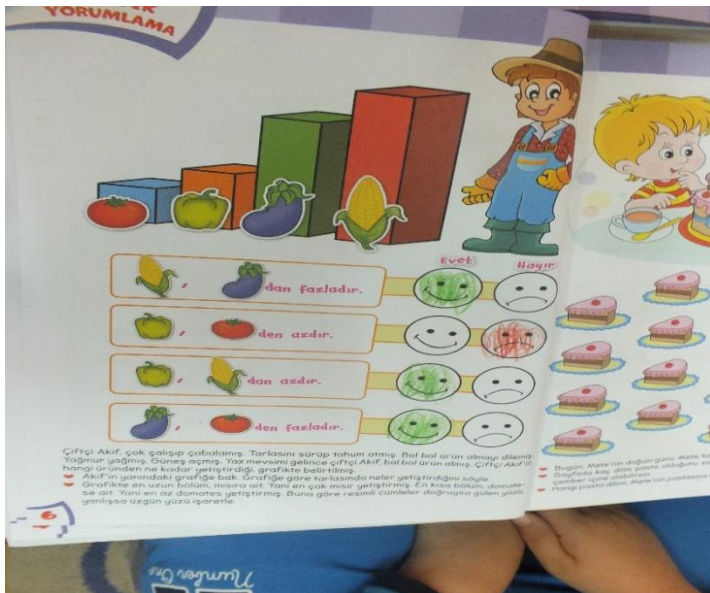
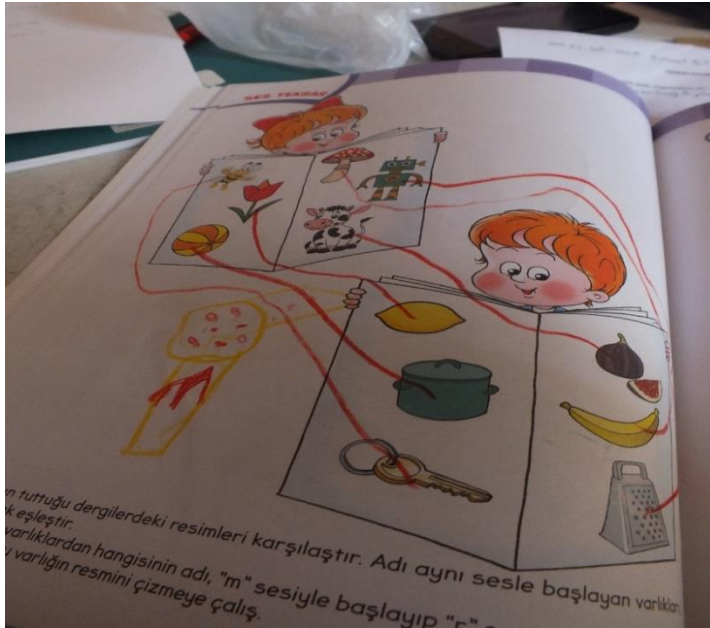


Figure 6. 14: Buse's writing samples from pre-school – 1st week and 2nd week

When Buse began the primary phase, she had some difficulties in keeping steady lines in the line-making activities (Figure 6.15). She was able to recognise appropriate

surfaces, such as paper or the board in the classroom, on which to write or mark. In the following weeks, she was able to produce certain sounds taught in the classroom, combine these sounds to produce certain words, and she was aware of upper and lower cases. As can be seen in Figure 6.16 below, she still continued to have difficulties maintaining her writing on or between the lines, and sometimes her letters in the produced words overlapped on the page. However, she showed an understanding of directionality, the gaps required to keep words separate from each other, and she produced a full stop, which shows that she had begun to understand punctuation marks.

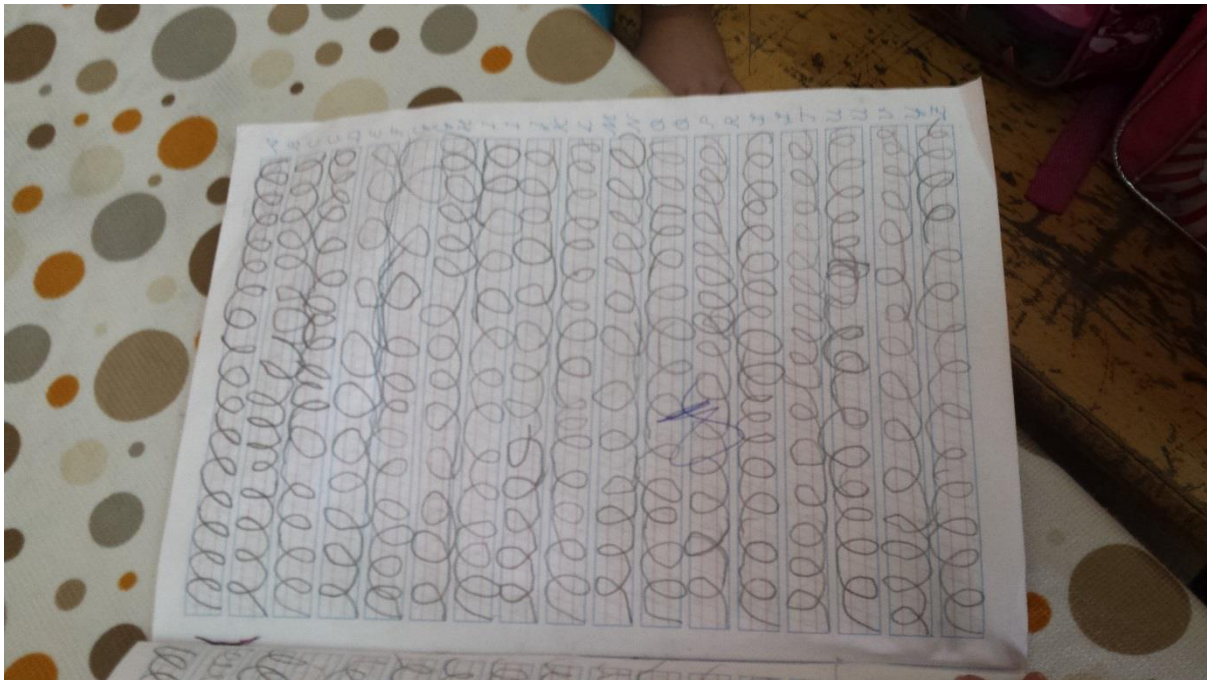


Figure 6. 15: Buse's writing sample from primary school – 1st week

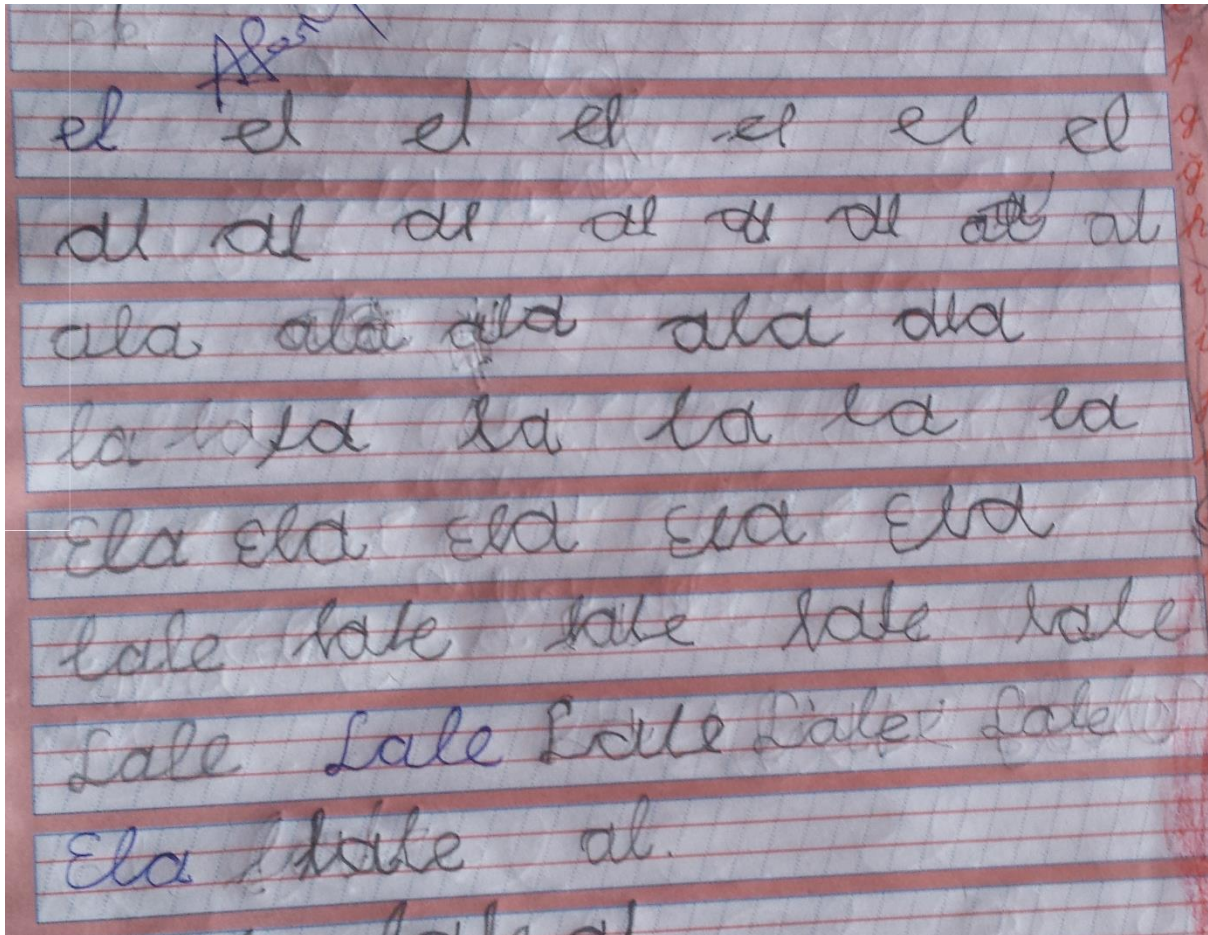


Figure 6. 16: Buse's writing sample from primary school – 3rd week

Buse had the ability to copy the words from the board or from the example shown by her teacher during the lesson. Also, she wrote with some awareness of the sentence as a writing unit of meaning. However, she still had to improve her skills in terms of writing a simple sentence starting with a capital letter and ending with a full stop, or independently producing simple sentences, in the last week of the study.

Buse's story here reflects an upward continuation on how she engaged with writing, which was influenced by the transition. It can be said that there is a lack of transitional practices for students to facilitate this process in the Turkish educational system. However, even though there is no actual attempt in pre-school to teach children how to write (letters, words or sentences), it can be seen that children develop literacy competencies such as phonological awareness or fine-motor skills in order to transition into primary school with a set of competencies which are significant when learning how to write. In this respect, this study shows that the pre-school and primary school teachers understand teaching writing as the act of writing, such as creating

letters and self-expression through writing, and other skills which can be described as 'pre-writing', such as vocabulary development, visual motor skills, or the knowledge of letters and the awareness of their respective sounds. This approach had an important effect on children, as we can see in the example of Buse's story; she had some kind of understanding of writing when she finished her pre-school education and began primary school, and she developed her writing abilities from creating lines to combining letters to create words, using punctuation, and acknowledging the gaps between words.

6.5.2.2 Ali's Profile

The writing observations and samples indicate that the developmental range of the focus children in the study ranged from children whose writing skills were still emergent to those who had loosely established understandings of early writing. In this manner, Figure 6.17 below shows Ali's writing at the end of his pre-school education. Ali was put forward by his teacher as an example of a child considered to be an '*above average*' writer. It can be seen that he started writing from right to left in the reverse direction with reverse letters to form his name. In pre-school, the teachers did not teach the children how to write letters, and so it can be deduced that he was able to generate writing from his own knowledge and understanding of print, but he was unable to use the letters in their correct shapes and direction. However, he was aware that what he wrote on the paper conveyed meaning (his own name), revealed a (mis)understanding of directionality, and did not demonstrate knowledge of the one-to-one correspondence between written and spoken words. Hence, he left spaces between letters and used capital letters to generate words, which shows that there had been attempts to teach him how to write his name, so he began to understand that his name can be represented in written form. He showed little independence and willingness to generate this word independently – which was not in the activity nor asked by the teacher; however, it was obvious that he had copied it from the stimulus word provided previously.

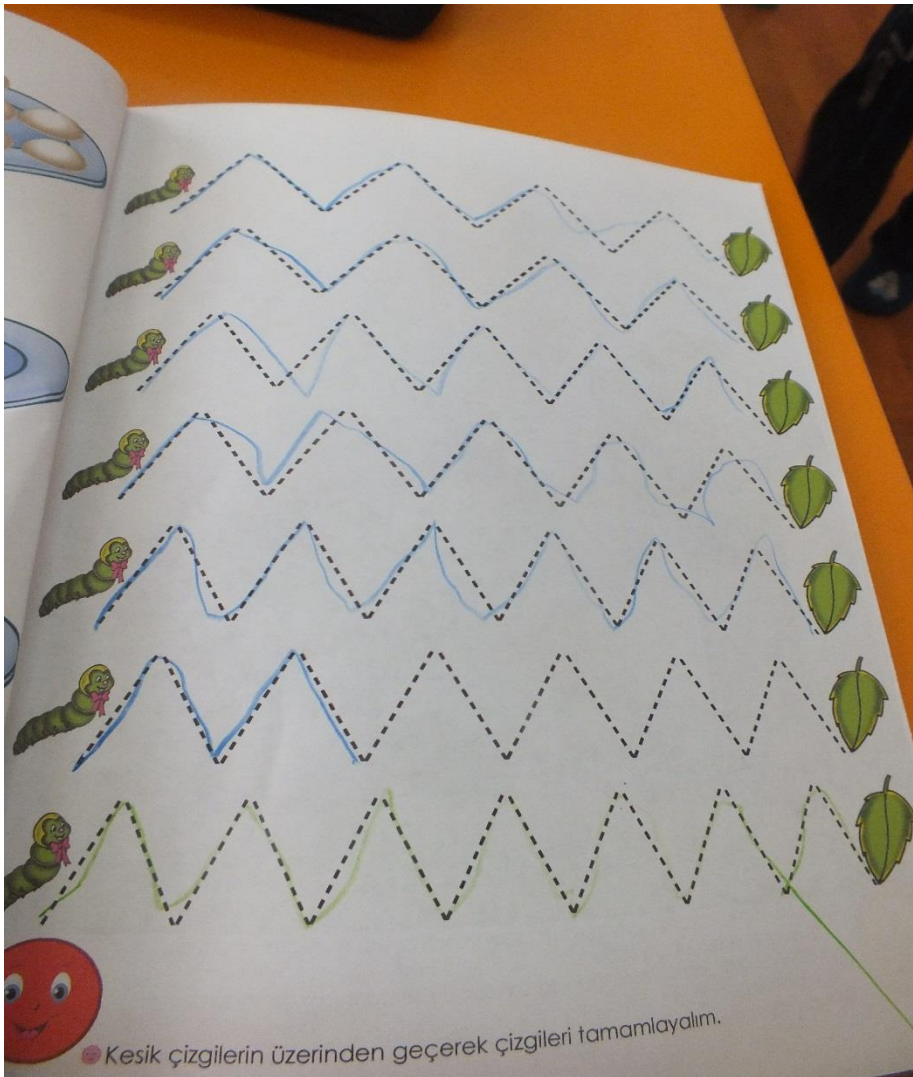


Figure 6. 17: Ali's writing samples from pre-school – 1st and 3rd week

by Ali were read by the teacher in the classroom, and the children were asked to write them on the notebooks independently. However, this does not mean that he used strategies to produce words independently, which might have shown more progress in his writing development. He, in this phase, corrected the directionality and began to write from left to right with the correct shapes of letters. He was able to use clear spaces between words, and he was able to use the page for what he was supposed to write. Yet, he did not attempt to edit or revise what he wrote, but he re-read his writing with accuracy and enthusiasm.

Ali's story as an example of an above average writer in this study shows a steady continuation in terms of the impact of the transition process on his writing development. His pre-school education obviously influenced his early writing skills with ongoing activities in the classroom towards transitioning between these two educational settings. There was support in the classroom for children in the field of written language to develop the basic notions to allow these students to be ready for the transition, such as preparatory activities which involved worksheets, books, identification of one's own name, and story reading and telling. In this manner, I can say that Ali's development from the end of pre-school through to the first four weeks of primary school was remarkable when compared with other students in the study. This might be a consequence of the pre-school setting or a good evaluation of the primary school teacher giving sufficient support to the children based on their individual needs.

6.5.2.3 Ceyda's Profile

Ceyda, from school C, was seen as a 'below average' writer by her teacher in the pre-school phase. Yet, we can see in the figure below that from the third week of the study onwards that she was able to track lines in the dot-to-dot activity. This means that she improved her pencil-holding skills and fine-motor skills when she was at the end of the pre-school phase. She had a level of hand-eye coordination. Also, she produced all of the numbers in the correct way, and she had an awareness that shapes produce meanings. Ceyda knew where to start writing numbers and where to end, which means that she had an understanding of directionality in pre-school education. It can be seen in Figure 6.19 below that she erased some numbers in the boxes in the activity and made new ones. In other words, she found her mistakes and corrected her own writing without adult help.

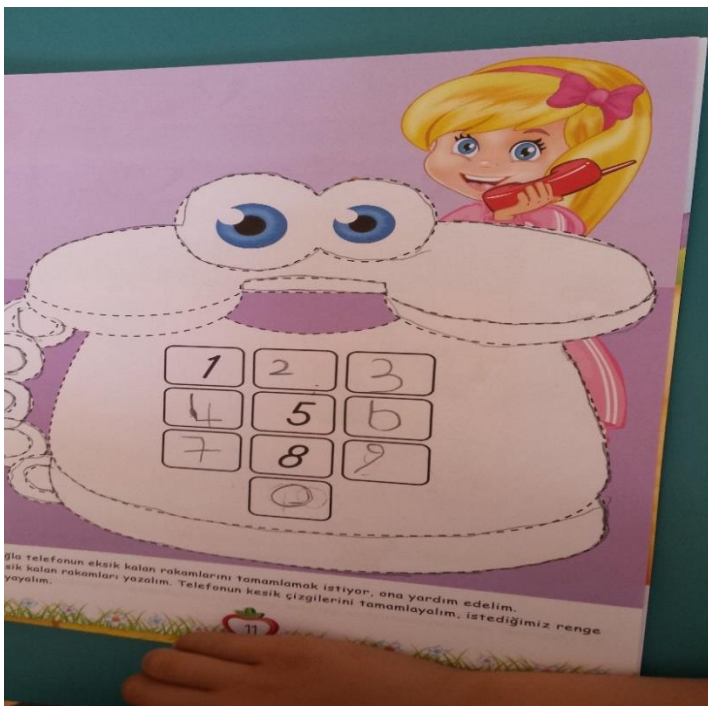
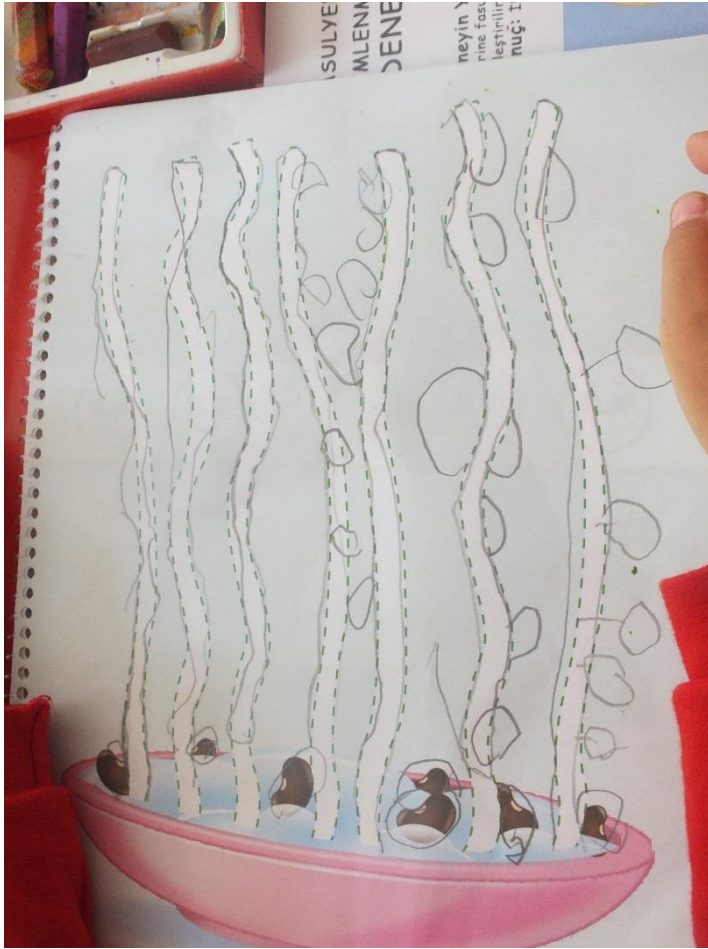


Figure 6. 19: Ceyda's writing samples from pre-school – 1st and 3rd week

When Ceyda transitioned into the primary classroom, she began to show understandings of the fact that letters represent sounds (Figure 6.20). Through the writing instruction in the classroom, she was able to produce lower and upper cases of letters. In the following weeks, she was able to produce words with taught letters and use clear gaps between words (Figure 6.21). She also included some pictures in her writings to communicate meaning, and she was able to copy letters and words accurately from the examples.

I did not observe any use of punctuation marks by Ceyda in the study. However, this might be due to the slightly different writing instruction in the classroom, which means that it does not represent her or her classmates' understandings of punctuation marks. In terms of the transition process, it can be seen that Ceyda developed fine motor skills, and she was able to draw lines and write numbers, to recognise her own name, to distinguish letters from numbers, and she knew the conventional spatial orientation of writing at the end of the pre-school phase. According to Santos (2015), these aforementioned developments can be seen as facilitators for the transition from pre-school to primary school with regards to writing competencies. In this regard, the writing instruction in pre-school can be seen as having played an important role in Ceyda's writing in primary school, as she developed these pre-writing skills throughout the first four weeks of primary school: she was able to produce lower and upper case letters and produce words with known letters in the third week of primary school. However, there was a huge mismatch between the activities in pre-school and primary school that could have adversely affected the transition. For instance, in pre-school, writing instruction was more play-based, and Ceyda was able to develop her skills with games; however, in the primary classroom, this instruction was mostly more formal, with books and notebooks.



Figure 6. 20: Ceyda's writing sample from primary school – 2nd week

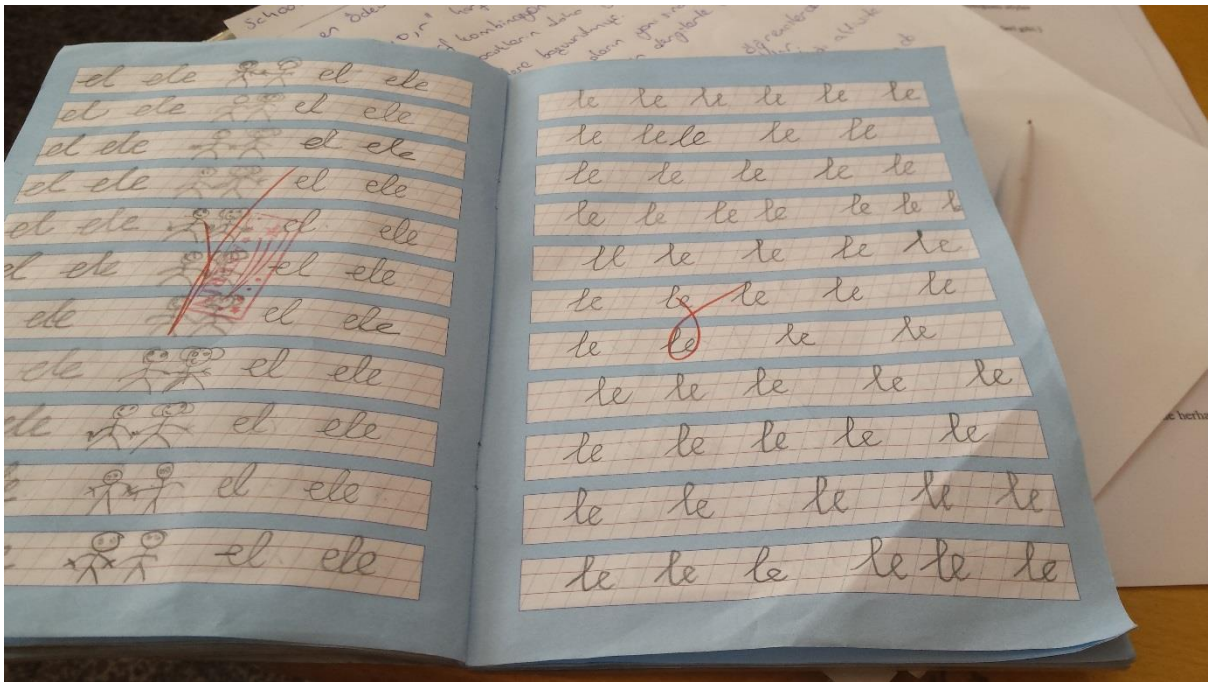


Figure 6. 21: Ceyda's writing sample from primary school – 3rd week

6.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, it has been shown that the children made progress in the transition process from pre-school to primary school education. With the support that the children received throughout pre-school, they developed their emergent writing skills, such as fine motor skills or phonological awareness, before they began the primary setting. Based on the observations and writing samples in the study, it can be deduced that the children made the most progress at the beginning of primary school. The children developed their pre-writing skills in primary school, and they all began constructing letters, words and sentences, using gaps between words, and using some punctuation marks, all of which was achieved in the first four weeks. This might be seen as a breakthrough, as going from drawing lines to construction of sentences is great progress. This progress might also be influenced by the letter-sound knowledge having improved in the pre-school context, which might have assisted the children's writing ability.

However, the transition process could have been evaluated more effectively in the schools involved. The children in the study did not have sufficient time to adapt to the new environment, and did not get any individual support from their teachers. In fact, the primary teachers had no idea about the children's backgrounds at the beginning of the observations, which might have slowed down the children's writing development.

CHAPTER 7: TEACHERS' AWARENESS OF EARLY WRITING SKILLS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I will present the findings of the semi-structured interviews and focus group interview in relation to the teachers' awareness and understandings of early writing skills. After reflecting on the teachers' understandings, the consistencies and differences within each group and between each group will be given, in order to have a clear picture of the issue.

It should be noted that as I was an observer for three to four weeks in their classrooms, it is possible that this may have influenced what the teachers said in the semi-structured interviews, as they knew what I was looking for during the observations and interviews. Therefore, there was a small probability that the teachers might have been trying to give what they believed were the right answers, rather than what they really think. It should be noted that people tend to respond with notional right answers when they are asked about their professional beliefs, so in this sense, the interviews in this study are as credible as any others, and any likely influences are discussed here based on the principles of transparency. As a consequence, I can only report what they said in their interviews and deliberate on the likely interpretations.

I used the labels A, B and C (for the schools), with the numbers 1 or 2, to differentiate the teachers on the basis of the school setting: the pre-school teachers were labelled 1, and the primary school teachers were labelled 2.

7.2 EARLY WRITING SKILLS

Analysis of the data derived from the interviews and the focus group interview was completed through using the NVivo11 programme. Four themes emerged from the analysis, and these were early writing skills, beliefs about institutions, writing pedagogy, and influences on classroom practice. In the first theme, it was found that the teachers talked about how they understood foundational writing skills and how these skills influence children's development in the pre-school and primary school contexts. Their responses show their understanding in terms of what early writing skills are and how children respond to classroom practices in terms of the difficulties they face, different children's needs, and how these children are supported by their parents or legal guardians, as a response to the first and third research sub-questions: *'Do pre-school and primary school teachers differ in their views of early writing skills?'*

'How are teachers' beliefs in relation to early writing development in the two settings similar or different?'

Due to the data-rich nature of this study, the findings are presented in a structured and organised way, drawing on the coded data gathered during the data analysis. Supportive quotes are used to illustrate what the teachers believe about writing development in pre-school.

Awareness of and the Value Placed on Foundational Skills

Theme: Early writing skills			
Main Code	Sub-codes	Pre-school	Primary
Awareness of foundational skills	Cognitive development	-	2
	Fine motor skills	9	8
	Socio-cultural development	1	2
	Linguistic skills	4	4

Table 7. 1: Codings of awareness of foundational skills

In the above table, it can be seen that pre-school and primary teachers in general talk about fine motor, cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic skills as necessary early writing skills, and these were also at the centre of their lesson plans. Both groups of teachers saw fine motor and linguistic skills as key skills, and they had very similar things to say about this, which shows that the physical and the linguistic features of writing development dominate their responses. For example, a pre-school teacher said, *'I think that the acquisition of psycho-motor and language skills is very important in terms of developing writing skills,'* (Aylin, A1) while a primary school teacher (Basri, B2) made a similar point that fine motor skills are the most influential ones to develop when teaching writing, including pencil-holding skills, which develops simultaneously with fine motor skills. This might be related to primary school teachers' assumptions that children come in with this skill, and so it does not have to be taught. Similarly, all pre-school teachers suggested that children learn how to hold a pencil in pre-school, and that it is a foundational skill in early writing development.

One of the pre-school teachers mentioned expressing thoughts through writing as a part of writing development, which I classified as socio-cultural development, as it represents an understanding of the aim when writing: *'And I support their language skills by pushing them to think and express their thoughts.'* (Aylin, A1). This represents a less typical view but places the emphasis on a slightly different place to some of the other comments – which are mostly based on secretarial skills.

Pre-school teachers also talked about linguistic skills when teaching children how to write. The references of the pre-school teachers in the focus group to foundational writing skills were mainly based on teaching vowels as sounds: *'Consonants are not taught as sounds or as written.'* (Fatma, school A). This might be regarded as a phonological awareness, and one of the primary teachers commented that teaching sounds in pre-school education is not problematic by stating, *'There's no problem with sounds.'* (Tuncer, school C). However, they suggested that pre-school teachers should have the skills to develop the use of finger muscles more, as well as attention-intensifying skills, the ability to maintain hand-eye coordination, and the ability to offer effective participation. Thus there appears to be a clear understanding of both the particular emphasis but also the supposed limits of the role of pre-school in supporting writing.

Awareness of Children's Difficulties

Theme: Early writing skills			
Main Code	Sub-codes	Pre-school	Primary
Awareness of children's difficulties	Cognitive development	1	2
	Counting problems	1	-
	Fine motor skills	8	6
	Pencil-holding skills	2	3
	Reverse writing	1	-
	School readiness	5	-
	Socio-cultural development	1	2

Table 7. 2: Codings of awareness of children's difficulties

Throughout the interviews, both groups of teachers talked about the difficulties children face when they are learning how to write. The teachers mentioned these difficulties in relation to several categories which can be seen above: the problems caused by cognitive development and socio-cultural development; problems related to counting; fine motor skills; pencil-holding skills; reverse writing; and school readiness. The highest number of comments were related to 'fine motor skills', underlining the importance these teachers place on this skill in learning how to write. On the other hand, although teachers identify this as a necessary skill for writing development, which was shown in the previous section (foundational skills), it is also seen as a problem for young writers: *'The hardest thing about teaching writing is developing the writing skills of the children who are at school age but their hand muscles (fine motor skills) are not sufficiently developed to write.'* (Aylin, A1).

Both groups of teachers agreed on the children's difficulties related to the problems given above as being typical of children at the beginning of pre-school: *'In general, their development is at the beginning incomplete.'* (Beren, B1); *'Well, writing skills have not developed yet, the fine motor skills must develop. The skill to hold a pencil (psychomotor) is not sufficient as well.'* (Neslihan, A2).

All of the pre-school teachers drew attention to 'school readiness', which they see as being caused by not getting a pre-school education, which leads to further problems at the beginning of primary education. Indeed, there were suggestions that pre-school education was valued and effective in overcoming the difficulties children can face in primary school. Primary school teachers supported this statement by suggesting that when children come to the primary school without any pre-school experience they face a number of challenges: *'He or she is shy. It is difficult for him or her to participate in group activities at first. If the writing preparation process is evaluated properly, he or she will be appreciated to participate in writing activities in time.'* (Basri, B2). The comment by this teacher not only emphasises a belief in the value of pre-school experience, but it seeks to go beyond a simple skills-based experience to encompass other aspects such as confidence.

There was relatively little emphasis on the difficulties related to cognitive and socio-cultural development, as well as counting and reverse writing, from the pre-school teachers, whereas the primary teachers did not mention counting, reverse writing or

school readiness as difficulties at all. This suggests that the pre-school teachers were more attuned to early years writers' needs than the primary teachers.

Evidence of Writing Development

Theme: Early writing skills			
Main Code	Sub-codes	Pre-school	Primary
Evidence of writing development	Cognitive development	1	1
	Linguistic development	2	2
	Motor development	9	4
	Socio-cultural development	2	2

Table 7. 3: Codings of evidence of development

Although the two groups have broadly similar views on the importance of motor skills as evidence of development (Table 7.3), there is a slightly different emphasis, with pre-school teachers being more likely to suggest that children can easily learn writing with developed fine motor skills, which completely supports their thoughts regarding the nature of foundational writing skills and what can cause problems if not developed in the early stages of learning writing. In this respect, this suggests a belief that fluency is a pre-requisite for writing development: *'After that, for example, when you constantly study lines and you have other literacy activities; of course, the child is making the lines look smoother with their developed muscles in time, whereas their lines are slightly more skewed at the beginning. How about when they pass to primary school here? They can write the letters, more precisely sounds, better in the first period.'* (Canan, C1). Furthermore, as evidence of development, pre-school teachers refer to hand-eye coordination alongside fine motor skills with an understanding of the link between play and learning, which suggests that they see children developing their foundational writing skills during pre-school education: *'For example, when the child comes to school, the hand-eye coordination is not developed yet. For example, if we have 20 children, we have a maximum of five children (who have developed hand-eye coordination). What do we do? First we start with playing. We take the beads, if there are any dice in our class, or similar activities. After that we teach holding the pencil.'* (Fatma, school A). On the other hand, the primary teachers viewed motor development

as the ability to hold a pencil and draw lines, as well as recognising numbers. It can be seen that the activities supported in each context seem to reflect this, with pre-school teachers offering a broader range of support activities.

The pre-school teachers also stated that, for young children, expressing themselves through writing was an important indicator of how children become writers, which is seen to develop at the end of the primary phase: *'They can create meaningful sentences, they can express themselves through writing.'* For one of the pre-school teachers, thinking and writing the missing figures in an activity affects children's thinking time by accelerating it, which relates to cognitive development. An activity may include 'what is before?' and 'what is next?' questions, in which children can point out a number coming after another one. In contrast, primary school teachers mentioned that they included plenty of dictation activities to increase the practicality of the students in their writing. They expressed their awareness of the automatised process which can be seen as part of cognitive development, and they focused on the transcribing process rather than planning or revising.

The notion of pre-school teachers' beliefs about linguistic developments as gaining sound awareness and being able to make meaningful statements is an important one: *'The child has now learned to read and write, and is able to make meaningful statements.'* (Aylin, A1). In this respect, it might be understood from this comment that decoding and coding of the phonetic system are seen as inevitably leading to comprehension of text when reading and the creation of meaningful text when writing. Likewise, the primary teachers put an emphasis on literacy skills as an indicator of writing development at the end of the first year of primary education:

'He can answer questions by writing. He makes sense in his mind of the instructions given in a written form. He can express his ideas in a few sentences through writing.' (Basri, B2).

The teachers' generic understandings of writing development at the beginning and at the end of the pre-school phase, as well as at the end of the primary school phase, showed a persistent pattern of beliefs that children develop their fine motor skills, such as holding a pencil and their drawing skills, through pre-school, and develop their writing, such as creating words and sentences, through primary school. For instance, one of the primary teachers emphasised the importance of pre-school education on children's writing as evidence of development when comparing the new educational

system with the previous one, which is also in contrast to the previous example as a positive understanding of the pre-school experience:

'Children used to come to school with developed finger muscles, did paintings, developed cutting skills, stuck pieces together. They came with developed fine motor skills and some kind of readiness through individual works in pre-school.' (Ayhan, school A).

Focus on the Need for Plenty of Practical Activity in Classrooms

Theme: Early writing skills			
Main Code	Sub-codes	Pre-school	Primary
Focus on practical activity in classrooms	IT	-	1
	Making lines	6	2
	Numbers	4	-
	Music	-	1
	Painting	1	2
	Playing	1	3

Table 7. 4: Codings of focus on practical activity

When comparing and contrasting the pre-school and primary school teachers' views on practical activities, it seems as though they have so much more in common. All of the pre-school teachers made reference to 'making lines' as representative of early writing activity, with an emphasis on either product or process. They suggested that making lines allows children to write in an easy way, and is a marker of the beginning of early writing development: *'I can show examples of writing skills as numbers and line drawing exercises we have done.'* (Beren, B1). In addition, they mainly described line-work activities as being beneficial for children to learn how to hold a pencil, develop fluency when writing, and as the foundation of conventional writing, by emphasising how this links through to activities in primary school. Similarly to the pre-school teachers, the primary teachers mostly focused on practical activities when talking about early writing, such as different ways of holding a pencil, painting, and the mistakes that children generally make when they begin school: *'We are absolutely*

working hard on it because the child misses a lot of letters in the letter writing work.' (Ayhan, school A).

During the interviews, the primary teachers mentioned that the aim of practical activities was to facilitate the learning process for writing. With irregular and regular line-works, they support children's writing skills and aim to help them enjoy what they are doing. In the preparation time for teaching writing, they include play-based activities such as painting, drawing in the air with fingers, and line-work on the desk and in sand. Although primary education was seen as having a more formal structure, primary teachers believe that they also use play-based activities. Yet the value that pre-school teachers place on physical activity can be seen here, as there is a level of informality in the ideas, suggesting a belief in a play-based curriculum: *'I mean, we as teachers can also support writing skills as a game. We can make it more fun by playing in the same way, not just with a paper and pen. For example, we can teach shapes on paper and with playdough.'* (Canan, C1). Also, the primary teachers value linking activities to the daily lives of children, and they support children's understandings of writing being socially useful: *'We make paintings of concrete objects that they like and encounter in daily life; we work through playing and music.'* (Basri, B2).

The findings show that there are an incredible amount of similarities between the practices in pre-school with those in the first year of primary education, with plenty of reasons to think that this is not accidental. The pre-school teachers expressed that, throughout their pre-school education, children are being prepared for the first year of primary education. Indeed, the analysis shows that most of the pre-school teachers seemed to believe that they do what is done in the first week of the primary education, with the activities based on line-making through books and photocopies, so that children can develop their pencil-holding skills. This indicates a demarcation of the roles of the two phases, with pre-school being seen as aiming to develop foundational writing skills, while primary school is seen as building on these skills which are developed in pre-school.

Resources for Pre-writing Skills

Theme: Early writing skills			
Main Code	Sub-codes	Pre-school	Primary
Resources for pre-writing skills	Hard resources	6	2
	IT resources	1	3
	Other materials	2	6

Table 7. 5: Codings of resources for pre-writing skills

The differences between the pre-school and primary school teachers' responses to the resources used in the classroom are pronounced, and they deserve rigorous scrutiny. As can be seen in the above table, the most striking find was the emphasis pre-school teachers put on hard resources such as '*books, magazines or photocopies*', '*paintings*', '*worksheets*' and '*notebooks*', especially when compared with their expressions of pre-school education as a play-ground. However, even though only one of the pre-school teachers referred to 'scissors' and 'playdough', which I categorised as 'other materials', the observation findings show that they also used crayons, glue and other materials in the classroom to support the children. Nevertheless, the pre-school teachers referred to hard resources more than other materials or IT resources used in the classroom, which shows that pre-school classrooms see themselves as dependent on traditional pen and paper activities. In this respect, the resources mainly consisted of books used in the classroom activities during the observations. Thus, these pre-school teachers articulate a belief in play-based learning that, while visible in the classroom, is sometimes off-set by a tendency to rely on and return to more traditional methods.

The pre-school teachers also discussed the resources used in pre-school classrooms with the primary teachers, and they asked for their suggestions: '*Actually we do not keep notebooks, but what do you say? It is not required to teach letters in pre-school. How do you suggest we support you?*' The pre-school teachers stated that there are writing activities which involved '*working on making lines through photocopies (worksheets)*', using '*concept magazines*', books '*prepared by university peers*', and '*unlined notebooks*', which referred to the resources used in the classroom.

The primary teachers' suggestions for using resources when supporting writing in pre-school classrooms often reflected their intention to understand children's development throughout their pre-school education, but almost all of the comments in this respect were centred on notebooks. Specific examples included the use of notebooks in activities, as in this teacher's explanation:

'You did the language activity, for example. You can also leave a note on that notebook. I mean, children should have a notebook. Numbers are taught, for example, in kindergarten. It would be nice if there was a notebook (to see where children were).' (Hakan, school B).

On the contrary, the primary school teachers mentioned the other resources they use in the classroom more, which might infer that the primary classrooms are less dependent on traditional pen and paper activities than in pre-school. The teachers discussed the activities around painting, drawing, playing ball games, the use of desks and sand, playdough, toy beans, and the use of an interactive board. When considering primary education in Turkey, it seems more formal than the pre-school context. However, we can say here that the teachers try to diversify the activities and materials to reflect a more play-based curriculum in primary school, and in this sense they espouse a set of intentions even if they are difficult to realise.

Understanding Different Children's Writing Needs

Theme: Early writing skills			
Main Code	Sub-codes	Pre-school	Primary
Different children's needs	Attention span	5	1
	Developmental levels	2	6
	Gender	1	-
	Use of right or left hand	1	-

Table 7. 6: Codings of different children's needs

Analysis of the data indicates that, despite bearing some minor similarities, the differences between the pre-school and primary school teachers' views on different children's writing needs are clear. The majority of pre-school teachers focused on the

attention span of children in terms of learning how to write: *'Writing is not a problem, but some children get bored very quickly.'* (Canan, C1). There is a suggestion here, reflecting an understanding of the teachers' role in maintaining children's attention when participating in writing activities, and the nature of pre-school as a play-based setting; ostensibly, the point of playing games to support early writing skills is to keep children focused on the activity rather than losing their attention. However, out of the 10 observations made in pre-school classrooms, only two of the writing activities were not paper-based. It might be that the teachers' awareness of young writers' needs is more sophisticated than they are able to enact in their context. On the other hand, only one of the primary teachers mentioned the attention span of children in relation to teaching children how to write. This teacher mentioned that writing activities take a long time, and she believes that the attention span of children is even shorter because of the schooling age of children; they easily become bored during activities. It can be said that this teacher views attention span both as a quality of the child and a quality of the activity. In this respect, the difference between seeing the child as the problem (i.e. they have a poor attention span) and seeing the activities as the problem (i.e. they are repetitive and boring) is blurred in the teachers' comments. However, it can be seen in the teachers' comments that the aim is to match the child to the teaching, and not the other way round. It is suggested here that if children were older, they could do more relevant activities, and this might influence children's development in a better way. In this respect, it is worth pointing out that both sets of teachers articulated an understanding of ways to support young writers, and acknowledged the place of informality and the development of foundational skills. However, the pre-school teachers felt constrained by the view that it is not their job to teach writing (even though at some level it is), while the primary teachers felt constrained by class sizes in relation to offering a formal curriculum that is easier to manage, given these constraints.

The primary school teachers also emphasised the importance of understanding the different levels of children's development when supporting children. As children develop differently to each other, the goal is to support them based on these differences. However, it is hard for primary teachers to achieve this, because there are about 40 children in each classroom and they have 45 minutes in each lesson. Even spending just one minute with each child seems an unrealistic goal. They talked mostly about the writing skills of children, such as pencil-holding skills, and said that they tried

hard to keep all of the children at the same level. Also, one of the primary teachers talked about the difficulty of keeping children interested in an activity, as children are taught most of what is done at the beginning of primary school. It is suggested here that disinterest is not linked to how things are being done but is a consequence of what has been done before, which might be related to transition and continuity. The lesson observations in the primary school paint a picture of quite a formal approach to teaching, which presents an interesting contrast between the pre-school setting and the primary one:

'The children come from pre-school with sounds. We're in trouble with it. That is because children become bored easily. Because they're full. They do not come as open (to learning). It's easier for me to teach a child who does not come from the pre-school. Why? Because the child is open to learning.' (Ayhan, school A).

This quote here also raises questions about the transition and how it is managed. Pre-school education is seen as problematic, because it disrupts the starting point for some children and the planning intentions of primary teachers. Then, it comes to the point that building on previous learning is clearly not seen as a priority; indeed, previous learning is seen as problematic by primary teachers.

Yet, with a little emphasis, one of the pre-school teachers complained about the books given by the Ministry of National Education as not responding to the different developmental levels of children: *'They either stay too far above the children's development skills or too far below. First of all, different books should be provided for the different age groups in the classroom.'* (Aylin, A1). The point here is that the teachers understand the need to match provision to where the child is. There seems to be a more pronounced intention to match provision to children in the pre-school context, whereas in the primary school the aim might be positioned as matching the child to the provision.

Family Support

Only the pre-school group mentioned family support as important for early writing skills. In general, they think that the more family support children get, the easier it is to teach them how to write. Teachers expressed that they organised *'a variety of activities and practices to include children's families in supporting their writing skills'*. This means that there is an awareness amongst these teachers that families play an

important role in writing instruction, as well as supporting children in the home. As this teacher mentioned:

'We need to give more guidance to other children, while it is very easy to support the gaining of skills for the children who can get family support.' (Aylin, A1).

Arguably this pre-school awareness of the role of the family might stem from the whole child philosophy more evident in pre-school settings.

From the teachers' responses in the study, it appears that these teachers have a strong sense of the role of pre-school as having a distinctive part in supporting writing. Therefore, it is important to explore what they think about each other, their practices, the skills developed, the overall educational setting, and the transition.

7.3 BELIEFS ABOUT THE OTHER INSTITUTION

Comments coded as 'beliefs about institutions' are related to the teachers' beliefs about their own institutions and to the other institution, including their views on each other, their own qualities, and the transition process. Even though I coded the teachers' responses to this theme under several categories, these responses to the interview questions in terms of what they think about early writing support in the two settings are often mixed together. This might be a consequence of the nature of semi-structured and focus group interviews, which allow interviewees to think on their feet with little time to prepare their answers to the questions. Nonetheless, the teachers' answers were related to their beliefs about the culture of the other institution, the importance of pre-school and primary school support in terms of teaching children to write, their views on primary teachers, their comments about their own qualities – what they can do and what they think that they cannot – and how children pass from the pre-school to the primary school setting. I put this theme under research sub-questions 4 and, to a lesser extent, 5: *'How do pre-school and primary school teachers value pre-school experiences in the development of early writing skills?'*, and *'Is there any continuity between the two phases?'*

Beliefs about the Culture of the Other Institution

Reported here are teachers' comments made in direct response to the question, *"Could you please tell me what is the role of pre-school/primary school teachers in*

enhancing children's writing skills?" as well as linked comments relating to the teachers' beliefs about what happens in the other institution in relation to early writing. The pre-school teachers' beliefs about primary education were expressed around the following aspects: the formal structure of primary education and the informal structure of pre-school education; teaching writing being the primary school teachers' job; play-based teaching in pre-school and structured education in the primary setting; and the amount of homework given in primary school. All of the pre-school teachers emphasised that teaching writing is not their job: *'I think the institution that should teach children how to write is primary education.'* (Aylin, A1). Teaching in pre-school was seen as an informal space and having a game-based approach; however, in primary school, there is a more formal and structured approach taken: *'Pre-school education is more informal than primary education.'* (Beren, B1); *'In general, pre-school children become more involved in activities, but primary school students want to play games for a while.'* (Canan, C1). This implies a view among the pre-school teachers that primary school becomes too formal too quickly. The reason for this might be related to the literacy targets set by the school, society, the curriculum or the teacher, which results in children engaging in much more formal tasks than was the case in the pre-school stage. The comments of one pre-school teacher suggest that it would be beneficial to have a more play-based curriculum in primary schools, and to leave formal classroom instruction until children have the foundational skills they need to achieve.

In terms of the primary teachers' roles in enhancing writing development, one of the pre-school teachers commented that primary teachers are responsible for supporting both the motor and cognitive development of children, working together with their families, thus supporting children's development at home as well. Teaching 'how' to write is seen as the primary teachers' job, again. The recognition of the problems with extremely crowded classrooms in primary schools, with a single teacher, is an interesting one which reveals pre-school teachers' views of their own settings being more appropriate for children's development. Also, the comment about the tasks in primary school, such as teaching the whole alphabet, the rules of language, spelling rules and construction of meaningful phrases, shows the pre-school teachers' beliefs about what writing is, and explains why they view writing as developing in the primary setting.

The findings draw on the primary teachers' responses in this section in relation to when writing instruction starts. On the one hand, the earlier sections suggest that early writing instruction starts with physical mark making, but their responses here indicate a view that teaching writing starts in primary school. The primary school teachers evaluated the pre-school setting as a place where young children develop their fine motor skills and learn how to hold a pen: *"It is necessary to develop children's fine motor skills through playing with playdough and their behaviours in relation to holding a pen."* (Neslihan, A2). However, for teachers, these skills allow children to reach a certain level of school readiness and improve their fine motor skills during their primary school days. This view reveals that primary teachers see the pre-school setting as informal, and their own setting as having a more formal structure where children build the other foundational skills for writing development on the fine motor skills developed in pre-school. Although all of the primary teachers discussed the value of a play-based curriculum in primary classrooms, the suggestion that pre-school teachers should include more play in their activities shows their views on the structured and unstructured contexts of the pre-school and primary school settings.

Importance of Pre-school Education

Even though the views of the pre-school and primary school teachers differed greatly in many respects, as with their practices, they also had many striking similarities; the most obvious one is the importance of pre-school in developing early writing skills. In this manner, the pre-school teachers stated the advantages of attending pre-school and the skills learned throughout pre-school education. Pre-school education was mostly seen as a beginning step to primary education, and a contributor to the writing development of young children. Pre-school teachers expressed their thoughts about the significance of their own institution by suggesting that children who have no pre-school backgrounds are in a *'disadvantageous position'*, and begin primary school *'a step back'*, and so have *'many difficulties'* in primary school, and *'lose the opportunity'* to learn writing through playing. It can be seen from these comments made by the pre-school teachers that there is an emphasis on learning through play. Manipulating playdough, using scissors or glue and playing riddle games are amongst the activities which take place in pre-school classrooms to boost children's fine motor skills. Also, there were several opportunities in the classroom for children to interact with their

peers. A pre-school teacher considered the pre-school setting as important to gaining skills:

'If children do not attend pre-school, they start primary school a step back. As other children have developed skills, children who do not participate in pre-school are behind. Both in terms of motor, cognitive and social skills.' (Aylin, A1)

However, these comments seem to contrast with the view that they do not teach writing in the pre-school setting. This reveals an awareness of pre-writing skills and writing skills alongside an understanding that one informs the other, but how and when these two things meet seems less clear.

On the other hand, the primary school teachers commented on how important pre-school education is in children's academic lives, and how it facilitates teaching children how to write, by comparing children who have a pre-school background and those who do not: *'they start behind'* and *'there are differences between them'*. Even though one of them discussed that if pre-school was evaluated properly, it would be beneficial for the child, the observations showed that the primary teachers did not know whether the children have any pre-school background or not. Their approaches to the children in their classrooms and the range of individual-based activities did not vary at all, and so the children with no pre-school experience received the same support as those who had. One teacher's comment about children with a pre-school background shows that the teachers could not reflect their beliefs into practice:

'Some of the children who have pre-school experience begin primary school with developed writing skills compared to their peers who are aged four to six, while others have pre-school experience but have not even developed the habit of holding a pencil. In this context, the children who have pre-school experience are very different.' (Basri, B2).

One of the primary teacher responses was in relation to the difference between the children who attended pre-school for two years compared with those who attended for only one year. She mentioned the skills developed in pre-school years as contributing to writing development, school readiness, emotional development, problem solving habits and participation in group work: *'There is even a difference between going to pre-school for two years and for just one year. A student who attends kindergarten starts ten times ahead of a child who does not. The fine motor skills of children are developed, they are cognitively supported, their social skills are developed in pre-*

school education, and the students become ones who are able to take the orientation process in a relaxed manner.' (Mutlu, C2).

In the writing samples of the focus children, there were differences in terms of these skills. Also, when I asked the teachers to evaluate the writing skills of the focus children, the pre-school teachers' viewed the focus children as below average, average and above average writers. This reflects a problem with evaluation based on no clear understanding of what constitutes writing skill or what it means to get better. It also highlights an issue with the transition, as children performing well in one setting might perform less well in the other. Furthermore, it is an issue which has different contexts, with pre-school teachers and primary school teachers making different judgements in relation to such evaluation.

Importance of Primary School

Only two of the primary school teachers commented on the importance of primary school in terms of developing children's self-expression through writing, and they see primary education as a place where children learn how to write. It is an interesting contradiction between the primary teachers' views of pre-school and primary school, which shows their views of writing skills. In other words, primary teachers might not see foundational writing such as drawing or scribbles as actual writing. Experience with letters was seen as the centre of writing development, which is developed through the primary years: *'This acquisition is primarily acquired in the first grade of primary school.'* (Basri, B2).

Pre-school Teachers' Views of Primary Teachers

In the semi-structured interviews conducted with the pre-school teachers, there were questions related to what pre-school teachers think about primary school teachers in relation to early writing support: *'Could you please tell me what is the role of primary school teachers in enhancing children' writing skills?'* Other responses throughout the interviews related to their views were linked to this code. The pre-school teachers mainly thought that primary school teachers have a more structured approach when teaching children how to write than pre-school teachers. They understand the value of what they do in pre-school classrooms and how the play-based approach reflects on the children, as well as suggesting that teachers in the primary context could learn

from their approach, as stated by this teacher: *'I think that some children are later than others because they are very strict and they are very hard on children.'* (Aylin, A1).

However, one clear finding from the analysis was that the pre-school teachers differentiated the foundational writing skills and actual writing skills, with the former seen as mostly related to the activities in pre-school classrooms, and the latter seen as the primary teachers' job. Here, it can be seen that when comparing the pre-school context with the primary one, the pre-school teachers appreciated their own context when supporting young children:

'If they teach in a little more game-based way, it will be more beneficial for both the children and themselves. As the children are coming from a game-based environment, it is a bit difficult to adapt them to the school environment and ask them to write immediately. They need to get more time to get to know the children and give them different support based on the children's skills.' (Beren, B1).

It can be argued here that, on one hand, there is a tension between celebrating the skills they have as pre-school teachers, and, on the other hand, there is a tendency to prioritise primary school teachers, because they 'teach writing'. The analysis also indicates that there is a view amongst pre-school teachers that the transition might be managed rather better than it currently is, and that pre-school values and aims might be still pertinent in the primary setting.

Primary Teachers' Views of Pre-school Teachers

The primary teachers expressed their expectations of pre-school teachers and how they see them as establishing the basis of teaching early writing by responding to the question: *'Could you please tell me what is the role of pre-school teachers in enhancing children's writing skills?'* The skills that children should develop in pre-school education, the activities that should be included in pre-school classrooms, and how pre-school teachers should prepare young children to become writers in primary education were suggested by the primary teachers:

'We expect from pre-school teachers that when the children arrive in the first year of primary school, they must be able to hold a pencil in the right way with developed fine motor skills. So, I think that the work done in the early part of the school in relation to these two areas of development has provided a very large contribution to our first grade teachers.' (Neslihan, A2).

The primary teachers also talked about writing acquired in the first year of primary school; however, here they mention the contribution of different activities such as expressing emotions with drawings, line-work, playdough and games which can develop children's finger muscles, such as playing ball games. There is an obvious contrast between the beliefs of these two groups of teachers in terms of when and where writing starts. On the one hand, the primary teachers, just like the pre-school teachers, believed that writing develops throughout primary education with formal instruction; however, on the other hand, they believed that children develop certain skills during pre-school education, which has an important influence on children's later writing skills.

Teachers' Comments about their Own Qualities

The pre-school teachers commented on their own qualities in relation to teaching children how to write in the early years. They put a value on 'early writing', such as developing certain skills of children in the classroom, and they stated that they did not have any training at university related to teaching writing.

'Because we do not have any training on teaching to write, we might teach it wrong.'
(Aylin, A1).

'So I'm not that much after all; I do not know much about handwriting, because I'm not a primary school teacher.' (Canan, C1).

This emphasis on training might be viewed as influential in terms of perhaps resulting in pre-school teachers under-estimating the value of their own professional knowledge in relation to early writing development.

The pre-school teachers, as mentioned in the previous sections, talked about the pre-school context as a play-based practice and a beginning step to learning how to write. However, here, their beliefs about writing, apart from fine motor or linguistic skills, present an interesting contradiction to how they support writing in the classroom. They claim that children can learn how to write in pre-school if they have more time, whereas they do not believe that they can teach writing.

Transition

Only the pre-school teachers expressed their thoughts about the transition by suggesting that pre-school education facilitates the transition process for young children, that these children can begin to learn writing in primary school more eagerly,

and reflecting on how the differences between pre-school and primary education (unstructured and structured approaches, according to the teachers' views) might affect children when transitioning to primary school. They believe that children can develop their skills and transition to primary education with these skills, and this makes the process easier for children. Also, they believe that children who have a pre-school background eagerly begin to read and write in primary school:

'If you think, for example, about how the child already sees a variety of things in kindergarten. He sees a range of activities, learns the numbers, learns the shapes, but the other child sees nothing. Children suddenly transition into primary school with high excitement. But when they get there, they understand that they are always writing numbers, dealing with letters, and constantly studying. I think this is wrong.' (Canan, C1).

The pre-school teachers believed that the pre-school experience offers readiness both cognitively and socially for children, in order to perform basic tasks such as counting and recognising numbers, phonological awareness and communicating effectively. However, the pre-school teachers believed that the orientation process, which only lasts for two weeks at the beginning of the academic year, should be extended at least to the first year of primary school with a more play-based curriculum and a greater emphasis on building on what is learned in pre-school education.

7.4 WRITING PEDAGOGY

All of the teachers who participated in the study made a link between classroom practices and early writing development, and they suggested how this might influence teaching and learning how to write. This theme was considered to represent a different understanding within all of the interview questions compared to research sub-question 2: *'How are teaching practices in the two settings similar or different? Do pre-school and primary school teachers engage in different classroom practices in relation to early writing skills?'*

Common Practices

In terms of the common practices in the classroom in relation to writing instruction, both groups of teachers talked about physical skills and linguistic skills being key, which is reflected in what they say about pedagogy. From a comparison of the responses, it appears that pre-school was viewed as more informal than primary

school, and supporting writing with only a pen and paper was seen as a formal way to teach writing. Activities such as learning shapes, using physical moves to understand concepts, and including music in activities were mentioned by pre-school teachers when talking about the writing activities which take place in pre-school. The primary teachers agreed with this by discussing how play has an important place in writing development, and suggesting that pre-school teachers should support children's learning with more games. Pre-school teachers understand the value of learning through play, and it is included in their pedagogy. One of the teachers gave me examples of these common practices in the classroom to show the range of differences and the place of play-based activities:

'I wish you had come every once in a while, since the beginning of the year. You would see it more clearly. I mean, we did some really cool games. For example, I put three shapes, side by side. Two were equal, and one was opposite. I wanted the children to put the object in the middle to the opposite side. They were finding the difference within the shapes. They were learning both shapes, and you could also teach them colours with this game. It can be given in different ways. For example, it can be given with music. With music, colours can be taught, and numbers can be taught. So, it is not necessary to call it a literacy activity and take it in a narrow frame. For example, it not only involves a pen and paper or line work. It can also be taught with games.' (Canan, C1).

This comment corresponded to what I saw in the classroom observations. For example, in one classroom, the teacher organised a game in which students learned to write numbers with instructions to use their body movements, such as 'run, skate and walk', to create the number '4'. On the other hand, the primary teachers stated that at the beginning of writing activities, they do line-activities in the classroom and teach the children how to hold a pencil. During the observations, they started teaching writing using line-works to improve fluency and to develop children's fine motor skills. After that, they began teaching the letters which represent sounds in the Turkish language. When they talked about pedagogy, they also talked about how they combine the letters, which can be seen as an example of linguistic skills:

'They start with line-making exercises and correct their mistakes in holding (gripping) the pencil.' (Mutlu, C2)

In this sense, there is a degree of consistency between what is seen as appropriate pedagogy by each of these groups of teachers and the dominant practices in each setting. This does raise a question as to whether teachers' beliefs drive pedagogy or whether adapting to the constraints of the context shapes the pedagogy and in turn the teachers' beliefs.

Teacher Beliefs about Learning to Write

The analysis shows that the teachers provided examples of their beliefs about learning in the classrooms. In general, the pre-school teachers implied that children develop their writing skills in conjunction with reading development through activities such as reading books and the surrounding print in the classroom. They view learning as understanding the issues, applying what the children learn in the activities, and remembering something permanently, as well as making meanings of what they see and hear. Also, the pre-school teachers commented on the rush that teachers put on children in terms of learning how to write, and the need to recognise different types of learners, such as visual and spatial ones, which can be supported with a range of activities for each child:

'We tell children something, but when we say it, children cannot imagine what we are talking about... But when we show them pictures or tell them in some way, with videos, the children can remember it permanently.' (Canan, C1).

The pre-school teachers in the focus group discussed how play itself supports writing. In the interviews, they talked about the schooling age as one of the biggest challenges for both teachers and students, as children still want to play games at five years old. In the observations, I witnessed play-based writing activities, such as with playdough, through which children learned the purpose of writing and the way that symbols can express thoughts. In the Turkish educational system, the schooling age for primary education was recently dropped from seven years old to five years old, in the academic year 2012 to 2013, so it is understandable that teachers were still getting used to the new system in 2015. This has been claimed to be accompanied by an approach to learning that is matched to this younger group with changes in the curriculum. These changes involve the two week orientation period, and physical and game-based activities in the lesson programmes. However, there was no structural or pedagogical preliminary preparation to adapt this change (Tekin et al., 2014). According to Tekin et al. (2014), this change created over-populated classrooms, especially in crowded

cities such as Istanbul and Ankara, with over 70 students in one classroom with a single teacher, and it led to the closing down of libraries and laboratories in schools in order to increase the number of classrooms, and an inappropriate orientation period for older children as they repeated what they already knew, and they mentioned the insufficient preparation stage for teachers, which lasted only five days and involved distance-based education as the only professional support to adapt to the new system. Also, when Tekin et al. (2014) compared the emotional, social, behavioural and schooling problems of 60 to 72 month olds and 73 to 84 month olds, they observed problems in terms of losing attention, hyperactivity, tiredness, not comprehending maths, literacy problems such as not writing words, or reading problems, which was agreed upon by a pre-school teacher in the study:

'I think age is also influential. Children are coming to the school without self-care skills (everyday activities such as dressing, eating or cleaning). You can only teach them up to a certain point.' (Fatma, school A).

A number of primary teachers in the interview viewed learning as being related to the developmental levels of children in the classroom. For instance, using activities based on children's daily lives and making writing as enjoyable as possible were presented as important when learning how to write. One of primary teachers mentioned how 'rewarding' children can help them to learn writing eagerly, and also, even if there are differences between children at the beginning of the year, almost all of them manage to learn how to write concurrently. This represents a belief that children learn subjects related to real life – not just based on the classroom context, and, with sufficient support, from their perspective even average and below average students can manage to write as well as other students in the classroom. Thus there appears to be persistent optimism in spite of the challenges they face.

Another primary teacher commented on the effect of the attention span of children on their learning, by emphasising the need not to overstretch children, and to make writing more favourable for children: *'We take care to make it fun for the children and not let them get bored. We strive to create activities that involve daily life and the student's immediate surroundings, so that they can be involved in the activities with great joy.'* (Basri, B2). This teacher made it clear that learning is viewed as a complex process, and school-based activities might be unfavourable for children. So, through linking the

activities with real life, teachers put an emphasis on the socio-cultural development of children's writing as an important aspect of their further learning.

Ideas for the Improvement of Provision

The teachers complained about the curriculum, the education system, school conditions and the physical features of the classroom, and suggested ways to overcome these problems and the challenges faced by both teachers and children. I collected these thoughts under the code 'ideas for the improvement of provision' in relation to writing pedagogy. The pre-school teachers generally commented on the pre-school curriculum – how rapidly it changes and how difficult it is for both teachers and students to adapt to the new curriculum.

It is interesting that, on the one hand, pre-school education is seen to benefit young learners, but is also seen as somehow not preparing them because of the changing curriculum. A primary teacher may see the problem as being a lack of preparation in pre-school, but the problem might be about a primary curriculum that does not start where the child is. With only one teacher in the classroom and more than 40 children, it might be difficult for teachers to support each child individually. Also, with the recent changes, there are policy pressures in Turkey that appear to be more interested in progress than in a good grounding in pre-writing skills. This means that what pre-school teachers understand in relation to early development is not valued at the policy level:

'Also, since the education system in Turkey changes very quickly, it is impossible for us to be able to catch up with the curriculum of the primary school teachers.' (Aylin, A1).

Yet, it is clear from the teachers' responses that there is a problem with moving the child on when they are not ready for the next phase, which creates a challenge for both primary teachers and children in learning and teaching how to write:

'Though there used to be something known as failing a class in the past, at the very least, the kids were able to take a class again a second time. Now that the children cannot fail in the classroom, the illiterate child goes straight to the second class. Actually, I do not think it is right.' (Canan, C1).

The majority of primary teachers, on the other hand, commented on the improvement of provision, which offers an understanding of the idealised characteristics of pre-

school but also refers to the improvement of pre-school education. As primary teachers view the pre-school context as supporting writing development, they also made suggestions for how to improve the pre-school context by including more activities, and this reflects what they expect from pre-school teachers:

'I think that pre-school work should include more original work, activities in open fields and in the natural environment, activities which involve creating miniatures of real life through observing the periodic and developmental characteristics of children.' (Basri, B2).

These suggestions for improvement reveal the challenges teachers face in each of the two contexts. The challenges in supporting children's development might cause teachers to feel limited in various ways, which will be discussed in the following section.

Teaching Limitations

All of the pre-school teachers in the study mentioned the teaching limitations in terms of supporting the writing development of young children. Pre-school teachers treat 'teaching letters or letter-like shapes', 'teaching numbers' and teaching 'cursive scripts' as difficult, which shows that they view this as the next steps, and that the boundaries between the two phases are not so clear to them. The reason why pre-school teachers have a greater sense of the challenges teachers and learners face could be related to classroom size, as there are only 10 to 15 children in each classroom, compared to primary classrooms which have more than 40 children in each, and it is easier to recognise these difficulties within a small group. Also, this might cover their beliefs about primary education, such as the view of writing as the primary teachers' job:

'In that way, I can teach children how to write in print (not cursive) writing. This will cause children when they go to primary school to have a little more difficulty when they begin to learn how to write with cursive scripts.' (Canan, C1).

This tendency of pre-school teachers to place limits on what they can do within their own role, which was earlier linked to their lack of training, is a persistent idea, and so even as they are vocal about the benefits of pre-school for writing development, they also seem to underestimate it.

7.5 INFLUENCES ON CLASSROOM PRACTICES

When coding the focus group interview data for statements relating to classroom practices, it quickly became apparent that the teachers often mentioned the problems they face when supporting young writers. The NVivo coding showed the range of things affecting teaching practices, and these are shown in Table 7.7 below.

Through interaction with each other, both the pre-school and the primary school teachers emphasised a variety of issues that have an impact on writing instruction. The teachers expressed their thoughts and beliefs about the external pressures on early writing instruction, such as the new curriculum, institutional demands relating to writing progress, class sizes and internal pressures, such as their own beliefs, and then shared challenges such as the unaddressed opportunity of working in co-ordination with each other.

Theme: Influences on classroom practices			
	Main code	Pre-school teachers	Primary teachers
Curriculum influences	Adaptation problems for teachers	5	5
	Cursive scripts and print	-	12
	Expectations of the curriculum	8	17
	Under graduation	7	9
Institutional influences	Competitive environment	6	5
	In-service training of teachers	-	4
	Orientation period	-	2
	Physical condition of schools	2	13
	Resources	12	8
	School transportation	-	2
	The number of students	-	1
Pedagogy and practice	Ideas for improvement of provision	4	9
	Teaching limitations	3	-
	Teaching methods	3	5
	Timing	5	3
	Transition	6	2
Beliefs and values	Coordination	5	5
	Importance of first year	1	3
	Importance of pre-school	14	5
	Views on pre-school teachers	-	4
	Views on primary teachers	4	-
Social influences	Family support	7	14
	Personal problems	1	3

Table 7. 7: Theme of influences on classroom practices

Curriculum Influences

Although the two groups have broadly similar views on the expectations of the curriculum, such as curriculum changes and the training of teachers, there is a slightly different emphasis, with pre-school teachers being more likely to discuss the influences of inspectors on their classroom practices and keeping documents on children's development, while primary teachers are more likely to emphasise the difficulties of maintaining a balance between the expectations of the curriculum and the teaching methods, and teaching cursive scripts.

Analysis of the focus group interview data indicates that a key shared issue which has a great influence on classroom practices was the expectations of the curriculum. The curriculum has recently changed a few times in Turkey (from print to cursive scripts, and from a deductive approach to an inductive one), and experienced pre-school and primary teachers did not get sufficient in-service training on this. This led to tension between what pre-school teachers know and what they feel they do not know. Pre-school teachers' confidence as early years professionals is slightly ambiguous. On the one hand, there is a clear sense of what the culture of a pre-school classroom should be like, and on the other hand, there is a sense that these skills might be at odds with the current curriculum changes. For instance, it was noticeable that the pre-school teachers felt relatively limited in terms of how they might support the teaching of writing letters, stating that *'children can learn it in the wrong way as we do not know how to write letters. This time, in the first class, teachers have to try to correct it to the right way'*. Also, they commented on children keeping a notebook in the pre-school classroom, saying that they do not know *'how to organise it'*, and they *'need to know the writing of the letters just like the first grade teachers'*. The requirements of the new curriculum might be the reason why pre-school teachers feel inadequate in terms of supporting writing in the correct way. This is also related to the outcomes of a product-focused approach, in which teachers think about handwriting more than the writing process.

In their focus on the *'new curriculum'*, the primary teachers focused on the problems teachers had in adapting to the new way of teaching. They also complained that there was a new programme but insufficient training of teachers, which caused problems for teachers in terms of supporting young writers. Besides, there were teachers with a lot of experience in the field who were hardliners when it came to certain teaching

methods, tending to advocate more traditional approaches, and there was a belief that that their views influenced other teachers:

'When you bring in an innovative movement, they react as if to say, "Are you putting new wine in old bottles, brother? Where did you get it?"' (Ayhan, school A).

Similarly, in order to sustain the new curriculum, the primary teachers argued that the training of teachers takes an important place. They commented that there should be certain criteria to becoming a teacher rather than a national exam based on a paper, as *'this profession is a profession of conscience and a profession of love'*. They also suggested that they learned how to teach writing along with other developmental areas *'in the field'*, meaning via an internship. By graduating from open universities without any face-to-face lessons or internships, graduates become *'qualified instructors but not teachers'*. This distinction between the actions of teaching and the principles of teaching is salient, and would resonate within the UK context, where a similar point is made that teachers are trained to perform (Murray, 2012). There were further discussions over the fact that pre-school teachers see that graduating from an open university can be very problematic. They stated that *'most teachers come from open universities'* by taking *'the information lessons for three months and immediately becoming teachers'*, which was seen as an insufficient way to train teachers to support young writers' development and to adapt to curriculum changes. Being an undergraduate was viewed as essential for pre-school teachers to become supportive teachers, and there were complaints about the view that anyone could *'become a teacher if nothing happens in your life'*.

The pre-school teachers also made several comments about the influence of inspection on classroom practices, and following students by keeping documents as hard copies and online resources, which caused some contradictions between their statements, such as, *'We don't show them how to hold a pencil. The inspectors suggest that we do not show them. I mean, we're also surprised by it.'* (Makbule, school C). Besides, one of the pre-school teachers suggested that *'the inspector does not want to see notebooks in pre-school classes'*, although they mentioned using notebooks when discussing the resources earlier. The pre-school teachers, on the other hand, suggested that they have a number of documents on each child, either in hard copy or online, as it is required by *'the curriculum'*, *'the director of the school'* or

'inspectors', but after completing them these documents do not stay in any particular place, which *'creates a gap'*.

The primary teachers found it hard to strike a balance between the teaching methods required by the curriculum and the expectations of particular outcomes. Comparing the new curriculum with the old one, the primary teachers stated that writing instruction should now be process-based:

'The new curriculum is student-centred. A student-centred system guided by the teacher. Actually, the system is good. When looked at from the outside, especially from the old teachers' points of view, it looks like a hollow system, but it is a system that pushes the student to the forefront, to thinking, and ensures that the students participate in activities.' (Ayhan, School A).

However, in national exams, the questions are intrinsically based on outcomes; therefore, teachers are actually required to support children in order to get high scores. The primary teachers expressed this pressure by discussing how there was the contradiction between the requirements and the expectations of the curriculum:

'The current curriculum is actually very good. It is student-centred, but with the system's requirements, plus the expectations from above (policy makers), and the expectations of the parents, teachers do not leave behind the old habits, and they are putting the student into a race again. It happens one way or another.' (Ayhan, school A).

Several teachers had also clearly struggled to catch up with the changes in education, and this was expressed as follows: *'We have a variety of problems. And with each new minister, we have a different system.'*

In their focus on the product of writing, the primary teachers argued that *'the character of this writing (cursive scripts) does not fit'* with the Turkish language. This might be related to the convenience of writing print before cursive scripts, because of children's fine motor skills and teachers' convenience in terms of teaching print as a routine more easily than cursive scripts (Sarıkaya & Yılar, 2017). Prompted to discuss the features of students' handwriting in the classroom, the teachers stated that children can write *'fast'* using cursive scripts. In the beginning, teachers generally pay more attention to the handwriting of children, and children do very well. After two to three weeks of learning how to write, teachers pointed out that children became bored very easily, and it is difficult to keep them motivated when compared to teaching print in previous

years, so they begin *'to write very badly'*. Also, with the new curriculum, children have difficulty learning plain writing after cursive scripts, and *'scatteredly write the plain text'*: *'What were we doing in the old system? Our writings, really, were almost the same as the whole class. Plus, we had our cursive script writing work. We were giving cursive handwriting one day a week in our cursive script writing works. We were giving handwriting with oblique writing, and the writings were so beautiful and they were so neat. But, right now, you cannot protect the beauty of the text in any way.'* (Ayhan, school A).

Institutional Influences

The comments below indicate the influences located at the institutional level – they are seen as exerting an influence, almost entirely negative, and also as something about which they, as teachers, can do little. Indeed, there is a sense that part of their role is to do battle with these daily constraints and frustrations.

The analysis revealed the variety of criticisms that the teachers made about themselves and each other. One of the criticisms was the competitive environment teachers create between themselves, which puts them in a rush. *'We are in a race, obviously, among teachers,'* said one of the pre-school teachers, and this affects classroom practices: *'It is said that you need to read and write in the second semester, but we are in a rush. After November, the first year teachers want children to read and write.'* They believed that the expectations of society and families put teachers in a race, as society *'chases after a good teacher and a good student'*, which is determined by the pace of teaching children how to read and write. For many teachers in this study, this need to demonstrate progress in very particular ways runs counter to their own professional knowledge of how to scaffold early learning.

The primary teachers' discussions about classroom practices led to the point that the physical condition of schools has an important effect on classroom practices. The teachers indicated that, as the number of classrooms in a school is generally not adequate for the number of students enrolled, classrooms are much more crowded than they should actually be. Also, there is only one teacher in each primary classroom, so it is not possible for teachers to support each student adequately in writing as well as in other skills. *'Per square meter, there are two students,'* said one of the teachers, adding, *'When you see the garden, the child does not have enough*

space. These are all factors (affecting classroom instruction). It does not matter if it's the first class or kindergarten.'

The primary teachers also referred to school transportation, which means that children from any part of the city can enrol in the school. This school transport system causes trouble for pre-school and primary school teachers, especially in their ability to interact with each other and discuss children's development. Having such a large number of students with pre-school experience of other schools has led to problems for teachers, in that these large numbers make it difficult to share the skills, characteristics, abilities and development of the children with each other, as expressed by this teacher:

'As our school is a central school, most of our students come from outside. The number of students coming from kindergarten in our own school is either two or three, I mean, no more than five. I mean, there is such distress. We have a school bus, it is like a service for all of the children coming from outside. In general, when students come from outside, they all come from different schools. Therefore, we do not have the opportunity to communicate with our friends face-to-face.' (Ayhan, school A).

There were some interesting thoughts among the primary teachers in the way that they experienced in-service training. There is a period of in-service training for 15 days at the beginning of the school year, for teachers to get prepared for the year and to share their ideas with each other. However, the teachers argued that it had recently become an empty period, in which they gathered in the school and chattered about trivial issues not related to education at all:

'We have training for 15 days at the beginning of the school year, and 15 days at the end. So, we call it the watermelon seminar. Especially, summer season is watermelon season, we cut watermelons, and we chat. There is nothing else. I think about 27 or 28 years ago, when I remember sitting in the hotel lobby, crying, glad, laughing, or sharing something. The only thing I'm talking about when I use the teachers' room now is either politics, or economics, or my car's brand.' (Ayhan, school A).

Pedagogy and Practice

Although the two groups have broadly similar views on how to improve the provision and on the teaching methods used in classrooms, there is a slightly different emphasis, with pre-school teachers being more likely to discuss schooling age and timing, while

primary school teachers are more likely to emphasise the expectations of children and the orientation period.

One of the most discussed issues among the teachers was how to improve the provision in terms of writing instruction. In order to improve the provision, the pre-school teachers suggested that the curriculum should be arranged based on the socio-economic status of society, and the schooling age should be changed to have balanced classrooms of children at approximately the same developmental level:

'Why? Because the curriculum is not appropriate at all. The child has to sit at a desk for 40 minutes. The five year old child continues to the first class, the six year old continues, and the seven year old continues as well. For 40 minutes, on a hard floor, all formal things are taught, and even adults become distracted. Think about it. I think young children usually become highly distracted.' (Gonca, school B).

The primary teachers, on the other hand, argued that *'the national education system does not have nationality'*, it was rather a collected system created through obtaining strategies from a range of different countries, with the aim of combining them to create the best system. Also, they stated that it was *'based on different expectations'*, and so it was not a whole system supporting both teachers and students. Therefore, they suggested that there was a need for a truly *'national'* curriculum based on the requirements of their own society and language. Besides, they suggested that if there was a curriculum to support teaching print, it would be better for both teachers and students in learning and teaching how to write. This means that they see the curriculum as somehow irrelevant to the needs of the children, because of the current emphasis on cursive scripts. These teachers discussed how, in their everyday lives, children are faced with printed letters in media such as books, phones, computers, billboards or markets. Therefore, the primary teachers believed that it would be more beneficial to support children to learn print.

Timing was another topic discussed by the pre-school teachers in the focus group, after a primary teacher suggested that they should begin with writing activities such as line-work early. The time to begin certain activities, such as teaching numbers, sounds (vowels) or line-work, varied among the pre-school teachers. Some teachers suggested that they followed the books when supporting these skills, so they begin earlier, and others argued that they should begin these activities in the second term, to create consistency between the second term of pre-school and the first term of

primary education: *'I start in the second term of pre-school education. There are others who start right now.'* (talking about line-work).

Although there were differences between the teaching methods of the primary teachers in different schools, they criticised themselves for pushing the children too hard to read and write as quickly as possible, and for being disciplined in the classroom. This criticism suggests a tension in the educational system in that teachers' own professional knowledge is somewhat at odds with the external pressure to focus on progress. A progress-oriented curriculum might not be necessarily mindful of what teachers know about learning. In fact, such an outcome-based curriculum has attracted many criticisms, arguing that "education should be open-ended and should not be constrained by outcomes, and that education should be valued for its own sake, not because it leads to some outcome" (Eldeeb & Shatakumari, 2013), as can be seen in this teacher's statement:

'We are also challenging the children. We try to support their development in discipline. I mean, they should follow that line when writing. The letter sizes will be equalised in size. Here, it should be oblique, or it should be cursive, as an example. We load a lot of things onto the child. Then, there's a problem with the child. There are a lot of children who get stressed.' (Hakan, school B).

References to teaching methods in pre-school classrooms, on the other hand, were often made in relation to the point of teaching sounds – vowels or consonants. However, there was no consistency between pre-school teachers on this, as some teachers suggested that they do not teach any consonants as sounds in the classroom, and criticised other teachers for including it in their classroom practices. The pre-school teachers in the focus group also discussed how the curriculum is insufficient to support young children, so they organised different activities based on their own professional understanding:

'When you look at kindergarten, what is written is so simple. Not even half of what we do is in the curriculum. Literacy studies, such as notebooks, or magazines - everything we do is something we organise.' (Makbule, school C).

Another important topic discussed by only the primary teachers was the '*orientation period*', which one teacher referred to as '*a 15-day line making period*' before they begin writing activities. The primary teachers saw this period as an '*integration process*', which brings children to approximately the same level of development. For

example, there are some children with pre-school experience and others who do not have it; at the end of the orientation process, almost all children have developed their fine motor skills, especially pencil-holding skills, which are clearly very important for primary teachers. It can be seen here that primary teachers value pre-school education and see it as necessary; however, this comment implies that it can be replicated in a 15-day orientation period. It tends to limit the foundational skills to practical pencil-holding skills, and does not give any space to the broader range of skills mentioned by the pre-school teachers.

Beliefs and Values

Most of pre-school group mentioned the influences of beliefs and values on classroom practices as being important for early writing development. For pre-school teachers, the most influential issue affecting the classroom practices of teachers when teaching how to write was the coordination between pre-school and primary school teachers. First of all, they complained about the lack of training that they had received in college in terms of how to support children to facilitate the transition process, and they explained that they did not have any information about what is done in the first year of primary education. *'There is a big gap; I do not think there is a union (between pre-school and primary teachers),'* said one of the pre-school teachers when talking about the need for integration between these two stages of education. They also stated that there is a system called 'e-school', through which teachers have to upload documents to show children's development, but it is for families, so primary teachers cannot see these documents. Therefore, they do not have any communication system between them to discuss children's development: *'I do and I see. Nobody else sees what I do.'* One of the teachers offered a solution to solve this problem, saying, *'Then there is a perfect disconnection between us. Programmes should be created by taking the views of both pre-school and first class teachers.'* (Makbule, school C).

There were several comments from the pre-school teachers on the importance of pre-school education in teaching children how to write. They referred to this phase as a '*preparatory*' stage for young children, before they actually learn how to write, to make children feel '*more comfortably when writing*', to '*become familiar*' with concepts in writing, and to '*develop their readiness for school*'. One of the teachers placed emphasis on the support they give in pre-school, saying,

'The child, for a short while, correct me if I'm mistaken, if he or she has gone a little longer or even for six months more to pre-school, the child becomes almost ready to learn to write.' (Makbule, school C).

Pre-school teachers view the differences between the pre-school and primary school approaches as problematic for children during the transition process. They suggested that, whereas in pre-school classrooms children are supported through playing, when they transition into primary school they are faced with a 'disciplined' environment which creates difficulty for children to orientate themselves and to learn:

'For example, there is a little freer environment in the kindergarten. The child is moving in such a free environment. You're taking that kid. You're putting him or her here in primary school. They're sitting tight on the row. You make them wait for 40 minutes to listen carefully, without any movement. That child gets bored, and consequently, he or she is overwhelmed, and does not want to come to school anymore.' (Ayse, school C)

The pre-school teachers expressed their thoughts about primary teachers, and suggested that what they do in pre-school is not supported in primary school. In their view, teaching how to write letters is the primary school teachers' job, but they push children too hard, so there is no steady progress in primary school. Also, one of the pre-school teachers stated that she fills children's files when they pass into the first grade in primary school, so that the primary teachers can see the children's skills, *'but the teacher in the first class does not read it'*. From this perspective, the teachers were looking for consistency between the pre-school and primary school environments, as explained by this teacher:

'The child who goes from the kindergarten is bored after a while. I do not know if it is mentioned in the curriculum, but children need to play some games and to be taught how to play. Maybe, it is possible that the curriculum pushes teachers too hard, so they just play games for a short time in the first year of primary school.' (Makbule, school C).

Although the primary school teachers see pre-school education as an important period in children's development, the primary teachers' comments here reflect a common apprehension that writing should be supported by developing fine motor skills and school readiness, which would make the teaching writing process easier for primary teachers:

'What were you doing before? Our previous friends? You were studying handcrafts, but numerical values were not being given. I mean, in terms of writing. Or, you did not used to do line-work very much, only certain types of work used to be done.' (Ayhan, school A).

Social Influences

A large proportion of the sample drew attention to the 'family support' which seems to have a direct influence on classroom practices. There were several suggestions from the pre-school teachers that parents are teaching their children how to hold a pen or how to write *'in the wrong way'*, as well as *'teaching sounds wrong'*, although the teachers suggested that families only teach *'the sounds of the vowels, never consonants'*. On the other hand, if they *'have support from their family, a child learns easily. But if there is no support in the family and if the readiness is zero, children learn in the wrong way'*. Also, the expectations of families create a pressure on teachers to teach children formally how to write and read as soon as possible – which runs counter to their own understanding of the need for foundational writing support:

'As our society expects, especially from the parents, children should be in a rush to read as soon as possible. Parents want children to read in December, and to write the letters taught during the first grade.' (Gonca, school B).

Similarly, there were several comments from the primary teachers emphasising that family support holds an important place when planning how to teach writing in the classroom. First of all, the teachers stated that there was a race between primary teachers, caused mainly by parents, as they asked teachers to teach their children how to write as early as possible, thus creating pressure on them: *'The parents are very eager for their children to learn everything.'* Besides, children experienced print at their homes with a variety of tools; therefore, some children begin school with a certain readiness, especially with regard to reading ability: *'Children can come to school with reading abilities but not writing. They can read but they cannot write.'* When I asked about the influence of pre-school on the writing development of young children, one teacher answered quite clearly about the role of parents or legal guardians in children's development:

'Yes, there is development, but it's not just about kindergarten. Why? There are too many stimuli in the environments now. The child is learning to use information

technology before learning to read and write. They all become a stimulus for children,' (Ayhan, school A).

A number of comments in the focus group interviews were linked to the effect of the personal problems of teachers on classroom instruction, as they expressed that they work hard so that they cannot support young writers enough: *'There is no problem if we do not work a lot.'* Besides, they discussed how the physical conditions of schools have an influence on writing instruction, as teachers cannot organise activities in the way that they want.

7.6 CONCLUSIONS

Both the pre-school and the primary teachers discussed a variety of issues related to early writing development, which shows their understanding and awareness. There were similarities and differences between the pre-school and primary school teachers' beliefs about classroom practice and how writing develops, but the teachers' understandings of 'what writing is' is more striking to discuss. This was shaped by their understanding of the other institution and the lack of communication between these two educational settings. There was agreement between the pre-school and primary school teachers that writing should be taught in primary classrooms, which results in a contradiction between their understandings of pre-writing and writing skills. In this sense, pre-school was mentioned as a setting which supports children's low-level or secretarial writing skills, and it plays an important part in children's development. Moreover, both groups of teachers discussed the play-based approach taken in pre-school and the more structured one in primary school, which causes transition problems for children. The effect of the curriculum on teachers' beliefs and practices was highly referenced, as it has been constantly changing in Turkey and therefore difficult to follow. It is also seen that a product-oriented approach was undertaken in writing instruction in primary classrooms.

CHAPTER 8: DISCUSSION

8.1 Introduction: Revisiting the Research Problem

The aim of this study was to assess the issue of what Turkish teachers believe about early writing development in both pre-school and the first year of primary education and how they reflect these beliefs in their classroom practices, as well as exploring the effect of the classroom culture and practices on children's writing behaviour in more depth. The study has uncovered various socio-cultural understandings of the role of pre-school and primary education in supporting early writing skills, with the former having a more free environment for children to develop their foundational skills, and the latter having a more formal educational environment in which it is perceived that 'actual' writing is learned and developed. This represents an important finding, as it shows that, although the pre-school teachers emphasised the role of pre-school education in developing early writing skills as being critical in constructing a foundation for children to become ready to learn how to write, and the primary teachers focused on the differences between children with and without this pre-school background as an indicator of later progress in the writing development of young children, both groups of teachers were less clear in articulating where the teaching of writing starts. The research also indicates that while there is an understanding of how early writing develops in both the pre-school and primary school phases, these teachers remain unsure regarding the complexity of this development and supporting this complex development pedagogically. The findings here in relation to teachers' beliefs echo Berninger's (2000) model of writing development, which begins with the development of graphomotor skills and traces development through to the formation of sentences. This study is a more detailed exploration of the ways in which pre-school and primary school teachers understand and support these foundational skills with different kinds of materials and activities. Additionally, this study offers a focus on how children in the classroom respond to this varied picture of teacher mediation in terms of their own understanding of writing development. The influence that this might have on young writers can only be tentatively suggested; however, there is important evidence from this research that in the Turkish context there is a product-oriented approach to writing instruction, and children are predominantly supported to improve their transcription skills. The findings from this research also contribute to the existing research by

exploring some of the ways in which teachers' beliefs relate to their practices regarding the teaching of writing in pre-school and primary school education. I have identified how teachers understand early writing development and their attempts to reflect this in their classroom practices, as well as revealing their beliefs about early writing skills, and, through a focus group interview, I have shown that teachers feel restricted by social and institutional expectations, and so there is little evidence of the individualised mediation of writing instruction. Additionally, the findings of this research also demonstrate a lack of transitional practices when children move from pre-school to the primary school context.

8.2 Writing in the Turkish Context

Writing instruction in schools is applied within a number of contextual constraints, which can have a particular impact on “how writers decide what information is relevant, how they construct meaning, and the voice or register they adopt” (Graham, et al., 2013, p. 384). Classroom practices can be restricted by institutionalised procedures that are themselves shaped by the sociocultural context in which a study takes place. In particular, time-pressures, classroom population, genre, collaboration and the perceived audience can influence both the teaching and learning of how to write in schools (Schultz & Fecho, 2000). According to Marsh (2006), the gap between what should be implemented in early years classrooms and the expectations in terms of writing outcomes means that it can become challenging for teachers to acquire a balance between their beliefs and their classroom practices. My study shows that the official curriculum of Turkey's Ministry of National Education (MoNE) adopts a child-centred approach, and teachers themselves understand the value of this approach. However, these institutional practices, along with class sizes, social expectations and pressure to demonstrate progress, have resulted in a practice that is out of step with both teachers' stated beliefs and official policy.

When looking into the tensions emphasised in the policy guidance in Turkey, it is obvious that children are expected to acquire foundational writing skills in pre-school classrooms (Yangin, 2007), and I have grouped these as cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic developmental areas. On the one hand, all of these skills related to early writing development are supported in the national curriculum, and are seen as having a significant influence on children in terms of developing their writing skills in the first year of primary school. In this respect, pre-school teachers are encouraged to support

these skills with a range of targets involving cognitive ones such as phonological awareness, socio-cultural ones such as communication, and linguistic ones such as developing vocabulary (MoNE, 2013). It is clear from the findings in this study that teachers in pre-school have the freedom to constitute their own lesson plans around these targets with a range of activities, and they do not feel under pressure to teach children up to a certain level. In this manner, the pre-school environment is seen as having a play-based approach rather than having a strict assessment-based writing programme. This play-based learning is also emphasised in other contexts; for example, the Australian Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR, 2009) recognises that play plays an important part in children's lives, as it makes them active participants and should be seen as their right. Similarly, in the UK, play is seen as fundamental in children's lives, as it influences their learning, wellbeing and development; therefore, it is important for early years teachers to understand and value 'play', which will last throughout children's early years (Nutbrown, 2012). In fact, both the pre-school and primary school teachers in this study understand writing development in terms of what they define as 'actual writing', and this was seen to be the job of primary teachers. This might be a consequence of the national context, which has little to say about supporting foundational or pre-writing skills. These findings concur with the study by Kandir & Yazici (2016), which shows there is inadequate target clarity regarding the skills that constitute early writing development as mentioned in the pre-school programme based on cognitive development. The Turkish pre-school programme aims to be holistic; however, it has ended up being too generic and not sufficiently specific in terms of the skills required. Kandir and Yazici (2016) further discussed the fact that although there is sufficient attention in the programme related to linguistic development, there is still insufficiency in terms of guiding teachers on how to support children's writing skills, based on their socio-cultural development, through interaction with adults and peers. On the other hand, however, my own study has shown that both pre-school and primary school teachers put more emphasis on children's fine motor skills as an indicator of writing development than any other skill. This understanding of early writing development leads pre-school teachers to use limited activities in terms of the development of other foundational skills such as "phonological awareness, visual perception, vocabulary, listening and speaking", as proposed by Erdogan et al. (2013).

The primary school teachers in this study are expected to teach writing through to the end of the first academic year as an assumed continuation of the pre-school phase, even though not all children will have experienced pre-school education (MoNE, 2018). This primary school setting, unlike pre-school education, represents a highly formal school environment; therefore, a formal approach is used in its teaching methods, and especially in writing instruction. According to Erden and Altun (2014), students who have just begun primary education in Turkey might have adaptation problems because of this formality, as they may want, and indeed need, to play more in school, and they may not be ready to sit in rows for a long time. In the Turkish national curriculum, it can be seen that children are facing this formality in writing instruction for the first time in primary education (Sarıkaya & Yılar, 2017). In the current study, this understanding of the role of primary education was reflected in how primary teachers planned their lessons, and this had an important place in the teachers' classroom practices. Their practices included teaching children how to write letters with capitals, the construction of words and sentences, the use of gaps between words, and punctuation marks, as well as reading accurately what they have written on paper. These findings are broadly consistent with the study by Sarıkaya and Yılar (2017), in which they discussed the pedagogic focus on the speed of writing and the legibility of text in terms of creating a foundational understanding in the evaluation of writing skills. This also means that the primary teachers were concerned with the linguistic requirements of text construction with a special focus on fluency, which was seen as coming naturally with the development of fine motor skills. In a study involving first grade teachers, it was found that Turkish primary teachers organise activities related to directionality, muscle strengthening and line-work, in order to develop children's readiness for learning how to write (Arslan, 2012). My study supports these findings by showing that only one of the primary teachers saw writing as a tool for communication with others; more typically, their teaching had rather a distinct goal, which was outcome- or text-based. This perception of early writing may be in step with its place in the public discourse and the expectations of society, with an emphasis on writing outcomes related both to how language is used and to social behaviour.

Yapıcı and Ulu (2010) discussed in their study involving first grade teachers in Turkey that these teachers expect pre-school teachers to support children's fine motor skills, line-making skills and pencil-holding skills. In this respect, the teachers in this study

echoed this element of the public discourse which focuses on writing outcomes or secretarial skills, and they felt pressure on themselves in terms of teaching their students how to write as quickly as possible. This pressure was raised by the primary school teachers, especially in the focus group interview when they discussed their interaction with pre-school teachers, and they drew attention to the negative outcomes of this pressure, such as the creation of a race between first year teachers to teach students how to write first. Avci and Sahin (2016) have suggested that MoNE could prevent the understanding of writing being based simply on rapidity and competition between primary teachers working in the same school, with a shift in the programme which clarifies the orientation period and extends the expected time line for teaching children how to write sounds. The focus on handwriting in this study caused teachers to ignore the writing processes and the aims of writing, such as communication. The affective weight of these understandings was well expressed by one of the primary teachers in the study: *'It is said that you need to read and write in the second semester, but we are in a rush. After November, the first year teachers want children to read and write.'*

These prevailing understandings of the role of pre-school and primary school teachers in supporting early writing development – concerned with secretarial skills, handwriting, fluency, accuracy and traditional teaching methods such as sitting in a row, and writing with a pen and paper – were also raised when the teachers expressed their beliefs about their own and the other institutions. This picture is consistent with the stated curriculum aims, which supports all of these traditional teaching methods of writing instruction in primary education; however, it also requires teachers to place children at the centre of learning (MoNE, 2018). When looking into earlier training practices, the current teaching approaches that teachers adopt can be clearly seen, which might be another explanation of why these more traditional practices still exist. On the one hand, these findings suggest that all of the teachers in the study share a belief in the value of pre-school education in children's writing development. The primary teachers described the pre-school setting as making a huge contribution in terms of children developing pencil-holding and fine motor skills, thereby making the transition process easier for the child as they continue to the first year of primary education with some kind of school readiness. Parallel to this finding, Sahin et al. (2013) reported that first grade teachers emphasised reading and writing readiness

when talking about school readiness for children. These teachers further discussed how writing absolutely should not be taught in pre-school classrooms, as reported by Sahin et al. (2013). On the other hand, just like pre-school teachers, they believe that writing is learned in primary education with formal instruction. Primary teachers, in this sense, value foundational skills, but see these skills as separate and not a part of formal writing instruction. Einarsdottir (2006) analysed the pedagogy and beliefs of teachers in Icelandic pre-school and first grade classrooms with regards to the policies and trends of early childhood education. She argued that in order to ensure continuity between these levels, there should also be continuity between the philosophies, pedagogies and structures of the two settings. This separating out of foundational skills in the Turkish context might add to the problems with transition. Thus, having two different contexts means that foundational skills have come to be seen as located in just one context, and not part of the complex journey of development each child takes individually.

In this respect, it can be seen that the teachers' beliefs were both shaped by the context and were resistant to and critical of the context, but this is less visible in the pre-school setting. In primary education, the teachers emphasised that learning how to write should be based on activities which are enjoyable for children. Karadag (2015) highlighted that game-based learning scenarios resulted in more fun activities and a rich learning-teaching environment, in a study designed to explore the use of game-based learning in primary reading and writing instruction courses. In the current study, the teachers further argued through the interviews that activities should be based on the daily lives of children, so that they can find writing fun. It is also emphasised in the primary school programme that Turkish language lessons should be supported with real life examples (MoNE, 2018). Although these beliefs reflect a more game-based approach to writing instruction in the primary school context, in the observations it was clear that there was a quite formal approach taken by the teachers. In addition, this game-based approach in primary school institutions is not supported by the national curriculum at all. However, MoNE clarified in 2017 that there would be compulsory 'game and physical activities lessons' in the first four years of primary education (MoNE, 2017). In this regard, the primary school teachers' beliefs were critical of the context.

These teachers mentioned a number of influences which shape their teaching approach, such as institutional ones which create constraints and frustrations. Ozturk (2011) reported that, in Turkey, primary teachers are faced with overpopulated classrooms, double shift education, a lack of facilities and finances, along with economic and social problems and problems related to their training. She further discussed how primary classrooms are more crowded when compared with other OECD countries, and how there are more students per teacher (Ozturk, 2011). In the current study, the physical conditions were seen as one of the important challenges faced by teachers, as there are many more students enrolled in schools than should be the case, which makes classrooms crowded and reduces the amount of time spent on individual children. This view also aligns with research indicating that the conditions of schools, class sizes and school location are factors affecting school readiness (Woodhead & Moss, 2007). The teachers also shared the view that this has an important effect on the communication between pre-school and primary teachers in the same school with regards to children's developmental levels, as children may transition from pre-school classrooms into different primary classrooms. According to Simsek and Buyukkidik (2017), the implementation of bussed education, which refers to children who live a long way from their school and arrive by bus, also leads to many problems in communication with parents and legal guardians. This would suggest that although primary teachers want to learn children's backgrounds in order to support them individually, there is insufficient institutional support which would allow this to happen.

In relation to the curriculum, there was a slightly different approach adopted by the pre-school and primary school teachers. The pre-school teachers emphasised a programme that they use in classroom practice which supports building their own activities around the children's skills and interests, through providing children with an environment in which to express themselves, and allowing free communication with each other and their teacher. This kind of environment is also seen as a key to the fostering of life chances in terms of children's development in the UK (Law, 2015). Nutbrown (2012) discussed in her report on early education and childcare qualifications in the UK that children should be given a rich and varied range of opportunities to play, which can be made possible with a well-planned environment in order to enable children to explore, learn and have a questioning mind. The pre-school

teachers in my study also discussed the difficulty in following the curriculum changes they face in order to meet the demands of the primary phase in terms of teaching writing. According to Gur and Celik (2009), these changes were caused by changes in the MoNE in Turkey and the monitoring of different educational policies with each new government, which brought instability to educational practices. In addition, the pre-school teachers discussed using a game-based approach, which is a natural part of the pre-school curriculum, yet they were confused about what writing is and where it begins. This confusion among pre-school teachers is a result of a pre-school curriculum which describes the activities of reading and writing readiness as “certainly not aiming to teach writing or reading. In the pre-school programme, there is no teaching of reading and writing. Neither is there showing letters or how to write them” (MoNE, 2013, p. 44). It could be argued that this limitation placed on the pre-school curriculum creates a context more in sympathy with developing foundational skills, and that the requirement ‘not to teach writing’ might better support the development of early years writers, even if this is neither fully explained nor fully understood. The requirement ‘not to teach writing’, however, might be informing a misunderstanding about where writing pedagogy starts, and creating a tendency to separate foundational skills from a coherent writing pedagogy. The aim of pre-school education is discussed in the programme as being to develop pre-reading and pre-writing skills throughout pre-school in order for children to learn how to write and read faster in primary education, but not to teach them how to write and read in the pre-school context (MoNE, 2013). However, activities related to literacy readiness are not clearly stated in the pre-school programme, which leads to differences and variations in the mediation of this programme in classroom practice (Alisinanoglu & Simsek, 2012). In this programme, there are simply targets that children should have fulfilled by the end of the pre-school phase, and these are related to fine motor skills and hand-eye coordination. Although it is suggested that teachers might include activities related to line-work, there is no clear statement about which line-work teachers should include in activities, in which order they should support children with these activities (such as first straight lines, then circular), or which activities can be used to support writing awareness in the classroom in the pre-school programme (MoNE, 2013). In this regard, the pre-school teachers expressed their feelings in terms of feeling incompetent in supporting children’s writing skills, as they had not had any experience of this in their training at university. They also expressed the belief that in relation to

curriculum changes they feel incompetent when it comes to adapting these changes, because policy changes have occurred so frequently and so quickly in Turkey. So, even though their practices may be more aligned with the good practices in early years writing support, their confidence is undermined by wider curriculum changes and a view that the teaching of writing occurs elsewhere. There is a need, therefore, to align this practice more effectively and connect pre-writing support with later writing pedagogy.

In the first year programme, writing takes a different place to that of listening, speaking and reading skills. Within writing aims, it is emphasised in the curriculum that children should be able to paint and to make lines; to write letters; to write syllables and words; to write numbers; to write meaningful and regular sentences; to write words and sentences about images; to use proper gaps between letters, words and sentences; to use capital letters and punctuation properly; to support what is written with images; to revise what is written; to share what is written; to create written work; and to apply writing strategies (MoNE, 2018). When looking at these aims, which primary teachers are expected to achieve in the first year of formal schooling in terms of teaching children how to write, it can easily be seen that these aims are mostly related to writing outcomes. In a study which compares two educational programmes (2009 and 2015) based on Turkish language teaching, it is reported that teachers were expected to evaluate children's development both in terms of products and process; however, in the 2015 programme, there were relatively short and insufficient explanations of first year literacy development (Atik & Aykac, 2017). The primary teachers in this study discussed, through both the interviews and the focus group interview, the difficulty involved in acquiring a balance between these expectations and the teaching methods required by the curriculum. According to Ozpalat (2013), this confusion, emphasised by teachers, emerged with a shift in Turkey from a teacher-centred to a student-centred approach. In this approach, teachers should organise lessons based on students' needs and abilities by encouraging them to take part actively in the learning process (Turhan, et al., 2009).

In the school context, activities related to reading and writing readiness are closely bound to fine motor skills, pencil-holding skills, phonological awareness and hand-eye coordination. Standardised activities to support these skills inform the curricular and policy goals, and those aspects of writing are mostly described as pre-writing skills.

However, according to Uyanik and Kandir (2010), there are a variety of skills emphasised in the programme which can also build a foundation for writing skills: oral language skills, general knowledge skills, writing awareness, alphabetic knowledge, phonological awareness and pre-writing activities. Writing skills, on the other hand, are seen as writing products, such as letters and words or punctuation (Yapici & Ulu, 2010). The teachers in this study endeavour to encourage broader aims; however, they feel a responsibility to ensure that their students meet the assessment criteria for writing development. In practice, students are taught how to write based on these prescribed features, with a focus on secretarial skills (Gunes, et al., 2016). Additionally, the problem of supporting writing skills based on the perceived expectations of the curriculum brings with it a further set of apparent irrelevancies: the aim in pre-school is to prepare children for primary writing, and so engaging children with a range of activities to support different kinds of skills (MoNE, 2013) might be desirable; however, it is not done to a sufficient level. In other words, these teachers offer a range of activities but do not value this approach, because they fear that this might not prepare children for the 'real' writing support they will receive in the primary school context. In the Turkish literature, pre-writing skills are also limited to line-work, drawing activities and fine motor development (Parlakyildiz & Yildizbas, 2004). Hence, this results in an undervaluing of the richer support context of pre-school, because of the formal demands of the primary context. However, this is not an issue limited only to the Turkish context. In their report on the transition from pre-school to the primary school setting in 14 countries, O'Kane and Murphy (2016) emphasised that pre-school education is still undervalued in terms of professional practice. In the same way, the aim in primary schools in Turkey is to teach children how to write using a student-centred approach (MoNE, 2018); having an enjoyable environment for writing instruction is implied, but in reality they offer a more formal setting for supporting young writers (Gultekin & Guven Aktay, 2014). This means that, in both the pre-school and primary school settings, the policy requirements are broadly conceived; however, in practice this is narrowed. Also, the more formal primary school context and climate exert a strong influence on both settings (Doygunel & Guneyli, 2018). By the end of the first year of formal schooling, children are expected to have learnt how to write meaningful sentences. The ability to generate letters and combine them to construct sentences seems more important for school success (Maddox & Feng, 2013). Frequently, then, the emphasis is on the writing outcomes and products rather than

the writing process. The aim for school writing is completely removed from the learner. In a study involving first year primary school teachers, one of the challenges that teachers believed they faced when teaching children how to write was that children do not understand what they have just written or read (Avci & Sahin, 2016). In this regard, students are expected to write for the teacher; they write what the teacher asks them to write, and how they are asked to write. In such situations, children have few opportunities to develop their own goals and little invitation to do anything other than report existing knowledge. Commenting on this, McCutchen points out that, “when put in similar situations, expert writers often balk.” (2006, p. 116). When looking at the wider debate, it could be argued that, in the UK, previous liberal values have recently been under attack from a more formal and teacher-centred approach under recent government initiatives (Beach & Bagley, 2013). In this sense, it can be seen how teachers’ beliefs and values might be out of step with policy and the direction of travel of national curricula. Even though this movement seems to be in the opposite direction in the Turkish context, this study suggests a difference between teachers’ beliefs and their classroom practices.

This situation is actually in contrast to the stated curriculum aims, which emphasise that in the first three years of primary school education teachers should focus on process, not on product, in language teaching (MoNE, 2018). It is further discussed in the programme that, along with cognitive skills, psychomotor skills (such as pencil-holding, the accuracy of writing, fluent reading, and correct pronunciation) and affective skills (such as responsibility, cooperation, being respectful, and being active in activities) should be considered in the assessment of children’s development (MoNE, 2018, p. 9). The national curriculum policy underlines the significance of writing processes when teaching young writers, and encourages primary teachers to approach a multifaceted evaluation. Also, there are no clear statements for teachers with regards to assessing children’s writing. For instance, it is proposed that data collected through the first year should be used for recognition purposes, not for making any judgements (MoNE, 2018). In line with this policy, students in the classroom should be given regular feedback on their performances, and teachers should be encouraged to motivate their students and not expose any mistakes or compare students with each other. These representations reinforce the perception that the relationship between teachers and students, or how teachers engage with the writing

process, reflects a student-centred approach. In light of these suggestions, which are located in the policy documents, the Turkish context for teaching writing appears, at the policy level at least, to be moving in a different direction to those countries in which the wider debate focuses on an emphasis on standards and assessment, viewed by many to be having a limiting impact on curricula and pedagogy (Priestley & Minty, 2013; Wyse et al., 2016). For instance, Priestley and Minty (2013) argued that an implementation gap between policy intention and classroom practices was created in Scotland with the new curriculum. Accordingly, Wyse et al. (2016) discussed the view that teachers need to be empowered to make sense of educational reforms. In this respect, the findings from this study show that, in spite of their stated beliefs, the practices of teachers in Turkey are more traditional than the curriculum, which might be quite different to the situation in the UK, where the curriculum is becoming more traditional but most teachers have been trained in a more child-centred way (Wyse, et al., 2016).

In such conditions, this might have an influence on students, both in terms of their writing development and the perceived nature of what writing is. A prescribed approach would neglect the use of an engaging environment for students to have their own voices and would ignore their needs, focusing instead on decontextualised requirements. A teacher/guidance-dependent and result-oriented student profile naturally follows. This creates a gap for writers between the knowledge of how to reflect language through writing and how to use writing to reflect ideas. “Arguably, the delivery of piecemeal objectives has been more highly profiled than the provision of engaging contexts in which writers can explore ideas, emotions and perspectives and find their own voices, exploring what they want to say as well as how they wish to say it.” (Grainger, et al., 2002, p. 135). From a critical perspective, therefore, this ignorance of the ‘voice’ in school writing raises questions about how writing development is understood in the pre-school and primary school phases. How do teachers understand early writing and support it pedagogically? The data reported here in relation to these Turkish teachers might find an echo with Grainger’s work in the UK with head teachers in primary schools, who commented that teachers are “constrained by their perception of what was currently allowed; their use of resources, their understanding of creativity itself; and in particular their concern to prepare children for assessment purposes and fulfil the required objectives” (Grainger, et al., 2002, p. 138).

8.3 How is Writing Development Understood in Each Phase?

How do Teachers Understand Writing Development?

From the views of the pre-school and primary school teachers in this study, it is clear that they reflect the conceptualisations of early writing as a complex process. While most pre-school teachers had seen early writing skills as developing socio-culturally, cognitively and linguistically, with the additional resource of fine motor skills, they were clearly aware that children in pre-school improve their pre-writing skills through a range of activities. The perception is that “young children’s writing tends to be focused at the translation stage” (Mackie, et al., 2013, p. 866), and that “handwriting follows a predictable developmental course, beginning with random scribbling, and proceeding in order to zigzag lines, letter-like marks, true letters, single words, clauses, and sentences” (Berninger, 2000, p. 68); so, to some extent, these insights from previous research are echoed by those teachers who were involved in this study. For both groups of teachers, pre-school was seen as a place for children to develop fine motor and pencil-holding skills along with phonological awareness, and primary school education as a place to develop writing skills, beginning with making lines (straight, zigzag and circular) and gradually learning how to write letters, words, sentences, and how to use punctuation marks. To illustrate, a primary teacher in school A stated, *‘I think pre-school education is very important and necessary to improve the writing skills of children. Beside that, children are prepared to write cognitively; they begin their primary education with their fine motor skills developed, oriented to the school environment, and with an increased awareness...We start teaching (in primary school) with letters. We teach children how to write cursive script letters first and how to merge these letters. After that, we start teaching punctuation marks by establishing meaningful sentences.’*

The teachers in this study discussed the view that writing is one of the most important skills for children to learn in school; therefore, it occupies a considerable amount of developmental time. Especially, in the shift from a game-based environment which involves the development of pre-writing skills to primarily writing letters, words and sentences in a formal school setting, children are seen as facing a range of challenges. These challenges are also noted in the literature and include the translation of ideas

into written language (Christensen, 2009), the transcription process (Berninger & Swanson, 1994), the acquisition of orthography (Pinto, et al., 2012), and the chaotic data which results from the exploration and understanding of the written word (Ferreiro & Teberosky, 1982); all of which were reflected in the comments made by these teachers. For some, fine motor skills are necessary to develop foundational skills and fluency, and their view was that if this is not supported in pre-school, it may cause problems for children in primary school when learning how to write. For others, pre-school is the place where children become ready for school through gaining self-confidence, especially by participating in group activities. According to Dereli (2012), in her study based on the comparison of pre-school and primary teachers' views on the transition process, both groups of teachers obviously agree on the aim of pre-school education as a context in which to develop children's school readiness. The teachers also believed that children's development can be seen as staged and linked to increasingly complex activities, such as drawing, making lines, letters, words, sentences and punctuation. To illustrate, several found it necessary to involve line-work and literacy activities in writing activities at the beginning of formal instruction, in order to enable children to write letters 'better'. Thus, early writing development was seen as progressing from "pictorial representations to more symbolic, alphabetic ones" (Christianakis, 2011, p. 23). So, while the data reported here draws attention to some level of insecurity and inconsistency in the views of these teachers, it should also be noted that they have a level of awareness of how writing develops, which reflects the concepts found in the research literature, especially those drawn from cognitive and developmental psychology.

Focus on Product and Transcription vs Communicative Skill

Ivanic's (2004) discourses on writing, which were also discussed in Section 3.4.2, offer a useful theoretical frame for understanding how early writing development is supported in pre-school and first year classrooms, as it enables an understanding of the power, identities and ideologies which form a basis for school writing. Blommaert (2005, p. 3) also discusses 'discourse' as "all forms of meaningful semiotic human activity seen in connection with social, cultural and historical patterns and developments of use". Four of Ivanic's (2004) discourses were informative for this study in terms of exploring the perceptions of writing pedagogy in early years

classrooms; these are the skills, creativity, social practices and socio-political discourses.

Ivanic (2004) suggests that these discourses occasionally exist in isolation; however, they are more often found in hybrid forms. In this study, teachers' practices and beliefs signal two different discourse positions: skills discourse and social practices discourse. The skills discourse is most evident in teachers' practices, along with their beliefs. Both the pre-school and primary school teachers' beliefs reflected a skills discourse in which "writing consists of applying knowledge of sound-symbol relationships and syntactic patterns to construct a text" (2004, p. 225). The teachers discussed the accuracy and correctness of writing as indicators of writing development; however, writing is not seen as separate from reading skills. Rather, there was an integrated and holistic approach observed both in classroom practices and emphasised in the curriculum. The teachers in this study put an emphasis on letter, word, sentence, and text formation. The primary teachers talked more about the sound-symbol relationships and anticipated that more activities related to fine motor skills would have been undertaken in pre-school classrooms, which highlights the tendency to separate the two contexts as serving different learning purposes. Ivanic (2004, p. 227) also discussed how "a substantial proportion of many writing curricula are founded on the belief that learning to write consists of learning a set of linguistic skills", which certainly occupies a considerable amount of time within Turkish writing classrooms. The teaching approach in this discourse is specified by Ivanic as explicit teaching in phonics, which is the accepted focus for writing instruction in state schools in Turkey. On the other hand, the beliefs, practices and curriculum documents reported in this study also reflect the social practices discourse, in which "writing is purpose-driven communication in a social context" (Ivanic, 2004, p. 225). Demonstrating the hybrid nature of recourse to these discourses, these teachers emphasised real-life contexts in primary classrooms and the need for real purposes for writing, and stressed the communicative aspect of writing in pre-school classrooms, which implies an acknowledgement of the place of social meanings and values within writing pedagogy. Also, in the lesson plans of primary teachers, there is a target for skills such as expression of the self through writing. So, despite the dominance of the skills discourse in observed classroom practices in both pre-school and primary school education, nevertheless there is also evidence of a pedagogy that "involves learning not just the

composition and construction of linguistic text, but also by whom, how, when, at what speed, where, in what conditions, with what media and for what purposes texts are ‘written’” (Ivanic, 2004, p. 235). In the next section I will consider the extent to which these teachers integrate or separate the different skill sets.

The Extent to which Teachers See these Skills as Informing Each Other – Are they Separate or Related?

The Turkish curriculum and its informing policy suggest that writing and reading skills should be taught together. Kandir and Yazici (2016) have shown that reading instruction alone is insufficient to support writing, and that the complex nature of writing means that it needs to be addressed through support for a wide range of integrated and related skills.

The classroom practices that were observed in the study might be seen as merging essential skills – reading, writing and oral skills – supported by lesson plans, which when analysed revealed that many of these teachers were encouraging children to build on each of these skills when learning the language; however, this occurred without a focus on the process, which is arguably the point at which the integration of these skills takes place. A pedagogic focus on the gathering of ideas, the representation of ideas in word and syntax, and the revising of text for accuracy and meaning, indicates the breadth of related skills that are required. Arguably, the emphasis is simply on transcription in the Turkish classroom, which reduces the complexity of the task to a very narrow range of skills. According to Goen and Gillotte-Tropp (2003), reading and writing skills are closely linked, and separating them can cause frustration in terms of the outcomes of education. In the 2004-2005 academic year, a new Turkish curriculum was adopted to provide early reading and writing instruction with phonics instruction, in order to allow children to understand the learning process itself, as well as the knowledge (Yasar & Aktay, 2015). For instance, when a child sees how to combine letters to create words, or hears a teacher sounding out a word as they read, she or he may use the same strategy. The aim of this method was “to bring up individuals in early reading and writing but also improve such mental abilities as thinking, understanding, ordering, questioning, classifying, relating, analysing-synthesizing and evaluating” (Gunes, 2005, cited in Yasar & Aktay, 2015,

p.2). Thus it can be seen that there was an intention to think holistically about learning, at least at the policy level.

If writing skills in pre-school and primary school education were supported with a uniformed approach that better integrated reading, writing and oral skills, with a focus on literacy as an integrated process rather than a range of language products, the children in these settings might respond accordingly. The current situation, however, does not lend itself to such an approach, not because they do not have sufficient capacity, but because they find themselves in a strictly structured learning environment, especially in primary school. This supports the argument of Rankin (1985), who discussed how an effective learning process is situational, integrative and holistic; therefore, classroom activities should be supported “not only by the writing act itself but also by learning activities that define writing as a total system of behaviour” (p. 51). Hence, students who want to explore more, who begin to develop “an understanding of the basic purposes of writing and occasionally attempt these behaviours such as writing a note or making a list” (Robertson, 2007, p. 41), might not be supported sufficiently in the formal context. From this perspective, therefore, high levels of self-regulation, such as planning, revision and composition strategies (De Smedt & Van Keer, 2014, p. 694), are necessary, as low-level transcription skills such as handwriting are neglected in school writing. According to De Smedt and Van Keer (2014), writing involves cognitive, metacognitive and affective processes, which makes it a skill, and one which requires different kinds of knowledge. In this case, an integrated approach should not only be based on the sum of writing, reading, oral and listening skills, but should also consider cognitive, socio-cultural and linguistic ones. The shift from learning through writing to learning writing occurs in this context. Indeed, writing, especially in the formal primary setting, might even diminish the learning process (Bangert-Drowns, et al., 2004). Ideally, writing should allow students to engage in self-monitored planning, concept building, and reviewing, in the building of knowledge (Bangert-Drowns, et al., 2004). It should rather be a place which involves an environment for children to have their own voices from their own lives – their own experienced worlds (Dyson, 2006) – which is seen to be missing in the Turkish context. The findings from this study suggest a quite structured instruction for teaching writing, which is based more on fine motor skills, phonological awareness and the accuracy of handwriting, especially in the primary school context. This also creates a contradiction

between the ideals of the holistic approach in classrooms, because, as has been shown, the cognitive and socio-cultural aspects in this teaching context receive limited attention from teachers. In this sense, by separating foundational writing skills (perceived as the focus of the pre-school context) from so-called actual writing skills (perceived as the focus of the primary school context), and focusing so much on the secretarial skills of children in producing writing, teachers have overlooked the benefits of a holistic, integrated and complex structure of writing development.

The data reported here offers some additional insights into previous studies conducted in early years Turkish schools, in particular those regarding the issue of how the skills taught in pre-school are integrated into wider pedagogy. For instance, Basar (2013) conducted a study to understand the problems that children, who learnt how to read and write in pre-school, face in their first year of primary school. He found that primary teachers, as in my own study, do not suggest teaching pre-school children how to write, believing that it causes problems such as a lack of motivation or a deceleration in reading and writing speed. What my own study shows is that 'teaching children how to write' is linked in these teachers' beliefs with the formal teaching of primary school, and not the foundational skills of pre-school. By understanding that 'teaching writing' includes foundational skills, these views may begin to change. From another point of view, Yangin (2007), in her study involving pre-school students, found that children who have a pre-school background attend primary school ready to learn how to write. The findings of this present study suggest consistency in how pre-school and primary school teachers have conceptualised and understood early writing skills. The patterns and consistencies found in terms of personal beliefs and practices suggest that there are differences in opinion on particular constructs of early writing skills, especially those that distinguish pre-writing from 'real' writing skills, and that the espoused beliefs with regards to 'writing development' among pre-school teachers (with an emphasis on play, drawing, scribbling and emergent letter formation and writing) were respectively different to those expressed by the primary school teachers, who gave greater value to the accuracy of handwriting, legibility and phonological awareness. The findings of this present study cannot suggest any knowledge of how conscious these teachers might be about their differentiation of writing skills, or the degree to which they might be open to change. However, the findings tentatively suggest that teachers whose understanding of writing foregrounds solely linguistic skills might face

problems in meeting the expectations of the published assessment criteria, in which the cognitive and socio-cultural aspects of writing development are also expected to be addressed by writing instruction (MoNE, 2013; MoNE, 2018). Also, these criteria might present a challenge for primary teachers, as in this view of early writing development writing skills are not separated from oral, reading and listening skills, but are seen as a part of this adoption of a holistic view. An over-emphasis on writing products as seen in the data from this study might neglect other aspects of early writing development, with an obvious effect on the overlooking of writing as an integrated skill, and the creation of such different classroom cultures as to put a strain on any transition process.

Pre-school Curriculum: Preparing Children to Learn to Write, or Preparing Children for the Primary Culture?

In the present study, the pre-school curriculum appears to prepare children to be taught how to write in a particular way; in other words, they become ready for the culture of the primary school from the perspectives of teachers. The pre-school teachers expressed their views on the aim of supporting writing and reading in response to perceived expectations, often reluctantly. According to Myck-Wayne (2010), there is a global movement toward academic progress and accountability in early care and education, which requires teachers to create more room to demonstrate evidence of progress. This, consequently, creates a pressure on both teachers and children to perform and meet the stated demands. The teachers in this study particularly mentioned inspectors, the pre-school programme, and their own backgrounds as limiting their practices in relation to teaching young children how to write. From Ntumi's (2016) point of view, in-service training for pre-school teachers is one of the most important challenges that teachers face in the implementation of the curriculum into classroom practice, which also creates a formative teaching experience, and accumulates socially constructed knowledge for teachers in terms of forming their backgrounds. In this current study, the teachers' assumption that the pre-school context is supposed to develop school readiness was in line with the national curriculum policy, which describes the aim of pre-school education as preparing children for primary education (MoNE, 2013, p. 10). While this policy suggests that "activities for developing school readiness should not be categorised under reading-writing readiness activities; but all the activities organised in pre-school education

should be identified as being for school readiness” (MoNE, 2013, p. 44), both the pre-school and primary school teachers perceived writing as a skill that was to be taught in the primary school setting. This does not mean that the pre-school teachers did not recognise the importance of foundational writing skills: *‘If children do not attend pre-school, they start primary school a step back. As other children have developed skills, children who do not participate in pre-school are behind, both in terms of motor, cognitive and social skills.’* (Aylin, A1). This finding is consistent with another study, which found that pre-school teachers see their own context as a place where children develop their cognitive, language, self-efficacy, emotional and social skills (Dereli, 2012); as has been shown, all of these skills are pertinent to learning, but are not always visibly integrated in later pedagogy. In fact, the teachers in this study claimed that children can develop fine motor and pencil-holding skills, which were seen as indicators of successful writing in primary school by both groups of teachers. Alisinanoglu and Simsek (2012) mentioned three groups of targeted skills that affect later success in primary education in terms of writing awareness: directionality, writing readiness such as pencil-holding skills and line-work, and sound awareness, such as syllables, which is similar to this study. In this study, the teachers expressed the belief that children recognise sounds such as beginning and ending sounds. All of these statements by pre-school teachers seem to prepare children to learn how to write. From the children’s samples, it can clearly be seen that children work on making lines, which can enhance the fluency of their writing (Baddeley, 2003); they recognise print in their environment, such as letters or words (Ehri, et al., 2001); they identify sounds when speaking (Vygotsky, 1978); they differentiate numbers from letters; they indicate emergent forms of writing, such as name writing (Mayer, 2007); they ask their teachers to write for them (VanNess, et al., 2013); and they discuss with their peers what they mean in their drawings (Jones, 2015).

On the other hand, the pre-school and primary school contexts have different cultures, both in terms of supporting children and the evaluation of learning. In the pre-school context, there is a more game-based approach for children, with an emphasis that “the pre-school programme is child-based, flexible, spiral, eclectic, balanced, and game-based, with exploratory learning and creativity in the foreground, offering opportunities for children to link to their daily lives, and giving a special importance to learning centres” (MoNE, 2013, pp. 14-16). This emphasis was not reflected in the teachers’

understanding of early writing development. However, it was clear in the observations that if pre-school culture is the first step towards the primary school context, then they should have some shared features. According to Neuman et al. (2000), pre-school teachers support the writing development of young children with a variety of opportunities to participate in writing and art activities; however, writing materials were limited to the writing centre, and rarely exist in other classroom centres such as science or music. Gerde and Bingham (2012) suggested that, as teachers provide different materials for children in the classroom, there needs to be a link between writing and daily activities or routines, so that the purpose of writing is understood. My study shows that teachers' understandings of early writing can lead to an inconsistency between pre-school and primary classrooms, as writing development (as perceived by these teachers) is not seen to be the role of pre-school teachers, and so is not regularly supported in the pre-school context. Even learning in these contexts is evaluated in different ways: for pre-school teachers, children can develop their skills and learn something through games and activities organised by teachers or in their free time; for primary teachers, children's learning should be seen in the texts they produce – from this perspective, if children can make accurate letters or name the sounds that their teachers show in their books or on the smartboard, it means that they are learning how to write (letters or words). In this regard, Santos (2015) suggested that these inconsistencies and discontinuities between pre-school and primary school education might be a result of teacher training and a long tradition of habitual practice, which leads teachers to have quite fixed views about their roles. However, this does not imply that writing products are not important, or that the writing process should be at the centre of primary teaching in order to enhance exploration and experimentation. What is clear, however, is that primary teachers need to adopt a different teaching approach in order to respond to different children's needs and different problems when it comes to supporting writing; to broaden their understanding of where writing instruction starts; to include an awareness of foundational skills as being part of a continuum of learning; and to be aware that expecting a single inflexible approach to supporting each child in the classroom will not be sufficient. As Margetts (2002) stated, an efficient transition process should be based on a logic of peer continuity, should be appropriate for children's and teachers' expectations regarding the curricula, and should involve a comprehensive communication process between all of the people involved in education, such as families, managers and policy-makers.

Primary Pedagogy is Narrower than in Pre-school – There Are Different Cultures in the Same Geographical Context

In line with their representations of early writing skills and development, teachers evaluate the culture of primary education in narrow terms. Unlike the pre-school setting, the primary teachers involved in this study attached less significance to the writing process than to the superficialities of style, and to the variety of writing skills. Indeed, primary teachers' understanding of writing is generally centred specifically on the accuracy and legibility of writing or low-level skills. While the primary teachers in this study emphasised a variety of activities that might develop young writers' different skills, their attention was primarily on secretarial skills. There might be several reasons for two different cultures to exist in the same place – even in the same building.

According to Kamerman (2006), the establishment of early years classrooms dates back to the 19th century, with the aim of helping working mothers and providing child care facilities. Recently, the aim of pre-school education has been attributed to 'school readiness' (Moss, 2008). On the other hand, primary education has been seen as reflecting governments' political, social and economic agendas, which have become more centralised and compulsory over time (Shuayb & O'Donnell, 2008). However, pre-primary education, including pre-school classrooms and early care centres, are still voluntary in Turkish education (MoNE, 2013; MoNE, 2016). When looking at the teaching of writing in pre-school and primary school classrooms, the findings of the classroom observations show that almost all of the activities in both the pre-school and primary school classrooms were organised around pen and paper activities. However, in the pre-school classrooms, these activities involved different games, such as playing with dough, painting and drawing activities, or riddles and finger games, all of which were designed to develop phonological awareness. In the primary school classrooms, on the other hand, all of the teachers focused on matters of handwriting and correction. It was not the case, therefore, that the primary context was a continuation or next step after pre-school education, as one might expect from these consecutive educational settings. Santos (2015) found that the reason for the discontinuities between pre-school and primary school education in relation to readiness for reading and writing might be caused by primary teachers' views that the transition is relegated to pre-school education.

On the contrary, even though primary school is where learning is seen to be taught, there is a narrower writing pedagogy here than in pre-school. If anything, it was primary teachers who most explicitly focused on the linguistic requirements of creating text; the pre-school teachers supported their students with a game-based approach by organising a range of different activities in a print-enriched environment. In this sense, “While school is traditionally seen as a place of learning and not of play, pre-school is more often associated with play rather than learning, from the child’s perspective.” (Samuelsson & Carlsson, 2008, p. 623). This suggests a view in which the differences between these two settings are a reason for these discontinuities; however, the OECD (2001) mentions a risk in terms of cooperation between pre-schools and primary schools. In the OECD report, it was highlighted that such cooperation might cause “a school-like approach to the organisation of early childhood provision”, and that adopting the contents and teaching methods in primary education would lead to a “detrimental effect on young children’s learning” (p.129). According to Moss (2008), this broader concept of early years education might be the result of a strong pedagogical tradition, as education, care and upbringing are treated as inseparable from a holistic approach to supporting and working with young children. There is a strong case, therefore, that influence from the pre-school to the primary school context is likely to be more beneficial than the other way round.

In my study, the primary teachers were unclear about the criteria for writing instruction, which suggests that they have not internalised the student-centred approach; putting learning in the centre rather than teaching itself, which is among the stated aims of the national curriculum (MoNE, 2018). Notably, the primary teachers ignored the second and third components of pedagogy, which were outlined by Bowman (2001, p. 182): “Pedagogy has three basic components: (1) curriculum, or the content of what is being taught; (2) methodology, or the way in which teaching is done; and (3) techniques for socializing children in the repertoire of cognitive and affective skills required for successful functioning in society that education is designed to promote.” These teachers attributed their assumptions of early writing development to specified skills, and neglected other assumptions that perceive writing as a complex process which can be attributed to cognitive and socio-cultural developments along with linguistic ones. On the other hand, the development of literacy competencies is valued more for

a fluent transition of children with a set of skills which are important to later academic performance (Santos, 2015).

For some teachers, the reason for this was that the curriculum has changed a few times recently, and so it has been difficult for teachers to adapt to certain developments. For others, a lack of institutional support and peer-pressure has had a great influence on their teaching approaches in the primary school context. However, this leads to confusion amongst pre-school and primary school teachers in relation to where teaching starts and where learning to write starts, and an obvious deficiency in thinking creatively about the transition from pre-school to primary school.

8.4 Transition

In general, both groups of teachers expressed their concerns about pre-school students transitioning into first grade. These findings concur with other studies that indicate the importance of a pre-school background to later academic success (Aboud & Hossain, 2011). In addition, Erkan and Kirca (2010) found in their study involving young Turkish children that children with pre-school experience were more school-ready than their peers, in which they defined 'ready' as reading and writing readiness with the support of cognitive and language skills. Similarly to the findings of my study, the results of Fisher's (2010) study indicate that pre-school and primary teachers were mainly interested in the pedagogical approaches adopted in both settings, such as play-based activities in pre-school and more formal approaches in primary school education. She further discussed how there is a curriculum discontinuity between these two educational steps, and how these different practices influence children's learning. These differences included the observation that five to six year olds engage in activities in a game-based environment, both indoors and outdoors, whereas children in first year classrooms passively sit on carpets and listen to their teachers (Fisher, 2010). These results are broadly consistent with the present study, as for teachers this transition period was important and was likely to create challenges for children, as well as prepare them for the primary school environment. The present study did not look specifically at the transitional practices used in the pre-school or primary school setting; however, because it followed the same children across this transition, it can contribute to the existing knowledge. A discrepancy was found between teachers' concerns over the shift for young children and how they approach this issue. At the same time, both the pre-school and the primary school teachers

outlined the differences between these educational levels in terms of considering the primary school context as the beginning of teaching and the beginning of learning to write, as will be shown in the next section.

Where Does Teaching Start? Where Does Learning to Write Start?

The transition process from one educational setting to another is acknowledged as an important indicator in the success of children's learning. According to Bransford et al. (1999), children's learning occurring in the former educational phase can predict their learning in the latter phases. In this sense, it was found that, at the beginning of primary school, literacy competencies in language are good indicators of students' future academic skills (Brinkman, et al., 2013). When specifically considering learning how to write, the beginning of primary education is seen as a critical period, where a more traditional and strict approach in teaching is adopted and learning is more structured. According to Pickett (2005), children's writing skills develop through interaction with the support of adults, which might help children to engage with print and also create opportunities to teach them about various strategies, concepts and skills; this begins before entry to the primary setting, and has a great influence on children. The findings from this study reveal the engaging approach taken in pre-school, which can create such an environment for children before they begin their schooling. In pre-school, with significant changes in the curriculum in relation to writing, the development of literacy competencies has become more important, and there is a pressure on teachers to transition children with school readiness; a set of skills which are seen as essential in learning how to write.

With recent changes in the Turkish national curriculum, there has been a gradual shift from the view that writing is the intervention area of primary teachers towards the view of emergent literacy or pre-writing strategies in early childhood education (Atik & Aykac, 2017). However, in contrast to the intentions of these changes, the findings of the present study indicate that both pre-school and primary teachers perceive teaching children how to write to be the job of primary teachers. Similarly to Ferreiro's research (1997, cited in Santos, 2015), there are two different approaches in terms of teachers' beliefs and pedagogical practices in Turkey. The first one is concerned with the 'reading readiness' approach, which aims to prepare children to learn how to write and read, through developing a set of skills as prerequisites. These skills, or so-called targets, in the Turkish literature (MoNE, 2013) can be developed with activities relating

to hand-eye coordination, vocabulary, fine motor skills, phonological awareness, visual-motor skills, listening and speaking ability, and audio-visual discrimination. This approach deals with teaching children how to write in a transcriptive way; therefore, it requires a knowledgeable adult or a teacher for the writing instruction. The emergent literacy approach, on the other hand, puts the child at the centre of learning regarding their needs and interests. In this approach, the focus is on children's understanding and the contextualised use of writing, which is viewed as the beginning of learning, through giving legitimacy to children's conventional literacy behaviours, respecting children's experiences and knowledge, and encouraging teachers to organise a print-rich environment in order to provide opportunities for literacy (Arrow & McLachlan, 2011).

In this study, the teachers' statements indicate that they have used both of these approaches; therefore, there was an inconsistency between the activities involved in classroom practices, teachers' understanding of early writing, and children's writing skills, which they seek to develop. This might be a result of the tension between those teachers who have more traditional beliefs and a more progressive curriculum, which seems to create incompatibility for those teachers working within early years education in Turkey. In addition, there were contradictions between their lesson plans, which were organised around the existing curricular guidelines, and how they implement these guidelines in practice regarding the role of writing in the early years. In this respect, the teachers expressed the belief that children develop their pre-writing skills in pre-school education, and show a fair amount of development when they pass on to primary education.

Specifically, pre-school teachers seem to have more freedom to interpret what is appropriate. They focus their practices on children's interests and needs by organising activities which usually involve playing a game. According to Einarsdottir (2006), Icelandic pre-school education highlights play, whereas primary school programmes revolve around formal lessons, which is a pattern similar to that seen in Turkish education. In the pre-school setting there is also no special seating arrangement for children, unlike in primary education, where children in Turkish classrooms are required not to move for a specific length of time, such as 45 minutes; so, in the pre-school context, children feel free to talk, share or be involved in different groups. Looking at these findings, pre-school teachers seem to work more closely in line with

the emergent literacy approach, as during the classroom observations they organised activities around the discovery of writing and its functions. Emergent literacy is already seen as developing through play in other cultures; for example, according to the Irish National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2009), play should be included in pre-school activities in order to allow children to interact with print, which will lead them to build an awareness of the functions of writing and writing conventions. This creates the tendency to see pre-school as having a clear and distinct focus; however, this is often seen as not being about teaching writing, as teaching is perceived as formal, and the informality involved here is somehow seen as 'not teaching'.

Regarding the beliefs of the primary teachers in this study, they did not clearly state which approach they adopted when teaching writing; however, they did not mention anything that fits into the emergent literacy approach. This is entirely in line with Ivancic (2004), who argued that there might be different approaches which can be combined when teaching children how to write; indeed, one sole approach (in this case the emergent literacy approach) can rarely be found when looking into writing instruction. In the current study, the primary teachers clearly indicated that they follow a more traditional way of supporting young writers. According to Sahin et al. (2006), this could be led by the change of curriculum, as the new curriculum focuses on an understanding of individual differences; however, teachers have been raised with the old curriculum, which was more traditional. Yet this is more related to the reading readiness approach, and, similar to the pre-school teachers' beliefs, it assumes a specific time at which to begin teaching and learning how to write that roughly coincides with the beginning of compulsory schooling. In this sense, the primary school context did not seem to be flexible or to build on the freedom that exists in the pre-school setting. However, according to O'Farrelly and Hennessy (2013), it is important to have a successful transition, as children experience a change both in the culture and the demands of primary education, which includes adaptation to a new environment, teachers, peers and routines. The primary teachers clearly acknowledged the pre-school context as a place where children can learn how to grasp a pencil and develop their fine motor skills; from their perspective, this is sufficient for primary school teachers to begin teaching children how to write. Kotaman (2014) also discussed in his study involving primary teachers in Turkey in relation to

school readiness that teachers focus on children's fine motor skills along with pencil-holding skills as a prerequisite for teaching writing. He further reported that those primary teachers suggested that pre-school should develop these skills but should not work on writing. Similarly, in this study, the primary teachers believed that the two week orientation period at the beginning of primary education can help children with and without a pre-school background to come up to a similar level. The emphasis here on 'level' is revealing, and is indicative of the primary emphasis on measurable progress. In the primary school context, the teachers were also less aware of children's backgrounds at the beginning of their schooling. This lack of awareness among primary school teachers regarding the place and value of pre-school education is both worrying and disturbing. This situation could create an obstacle to the implementation of a transition process and successful pedagogical continuity (Skouteris, et al., 2012).

The views of the pre-school and primary school teachers did not seem considerably different, based on their beliefs about the role of pre-school and primary school in early writing development. The pre-school teachers expressed their beliefs about the difference between the cultures in these two settings as follows: the formal curriculum in primary school and game-based curriculum in pre-school education; and children learning how to construct texts in primary school and develop pre-writing skills in pre-school. These beliefs find an echo in the Irish context which emphasises two independently developed educational settings, with the first based on active learning in pre-school, whereas the primary context has a focus on heightened academic goals (O'Kane & Hayes, 2010). The teachers in this study also offered the opinion that the discontinuity between these two educational levels creates challenges for both students and teachers.

In spite of this difference being articulated by the two groups of teachers in this study, both the Turkish programmes for pre-school (MoNE, 2013) and primary education (MoNE, 2018) expect the teaching and learning of writing to be oriented towards the understanding of what writing is and its aims. More specifically, with regards to the transition, both programmes express a number of intentions, implicitly or explicitly, with regards to the value of paying attention to educational continuity, what teachers should do, and how teachers should implement activities to facilitate this transitional process for children. It is, in fact, explicitly stated in the pre-school programme that the aim of

writing and reading readiness activities are as follows: 1) to facilitate children's transition to primary education in terms of school readiness; and 2) to increase the level of school readiness (Kandir & Yazici, 2016). In the programme for primary education (MoNE, 2018), all of the learning addressed through pre-school, primary school and secondary education should be supplementary to each other, with specific regards to the aims of primary school to support children who have pre-school experience in terms of physical, cognitive and emotional areas by considering their individual developmental needs. In this sense, Rantavouri et al. (2017) suggested that the notion of 'relational expertise', which includes discussions and making common decisions about issues, was significant in ensuring a fluent transition between pre-school and primary school, which becomes increasingly possible with the presence of collaborative boundary practices which focus on children's needs.

From the point of view of educational transition, there are not many studies which involve examination of the pedagogy and practice of writing in the educational transition from pre-school to primary school. However, there are a few studies that address this transition based on the proximity and continuity between these two educational settings, as well as the classroom practices of teachers in terms of supporting young writers' learning and development (Early et al., 2001; Margetts, 2002; Chun, 2003; Einarsdottir, 2006; Ahtola et al., 2011). These studies indicate that there are discontinuities in terms of teachers' beliefs and classroom practices between pre-school and primary school education. Early et al. (2001) found in their study involving public school kindergarten teachers in the USA that transitional practices which involve coordination with pre-school programmes and the community are limited. Also, there is insufficient preparation at the beginning of schooling in terms of transition activities. This supports the findings from this study that the primary teachers were not aware of the children's backgrounds or whether or not they attended pre-school education, nor did they seek to build on pre-school classroom practices; rather, they sought to replace them with their own. Ahtola et al. (2011) suggested in a study involving children who moved from pre-school to elementary school in Finland that implementing supportive activities during the pre-school year can improve children's academic skills when compared to other children who had experienced fewer transitional practices.

The teachers in this study mentioned their own training, and how feeling unable to abandon the traditional ways of teaching and being less open to innovations caused these discontinuities. According to Chun (2003), when different approaches inform pre-school and primary school education it causes 'macro-systemic discontinuities', which are related to a poor transition and negative outcomes in children's learning. Dahlberg and Lenz Taguchi (1994, cited in Einarsdottir, 2006) explained the reasons for this discontinuity as being the result of two different and predominant views of children in these two settings: in pre-school philosophy, childhood is seen as an innocent period, and freedom is stressed; and in primary school philosophy, it becomes a period in which the child needs to conform and the creation of culture and knowledge occurs. Einarsdottir (2006) discussed how the reasons for this lie in the different origins and traditions that exist in these two settings: pre-school emphasises development, play and activities, whereas primary school culture focuses on different subjects and progression within them. This causes two different concepts: teaching and caregiving, which leads pre-school teachers to feel themselves ineligible to teach in pre-school. In this study, although the pre-school teachers emphasised that the pre-school period plays a great role in children's learning and development, there were no practices observed which could be deemed to provide a smooth transition for children, and no continuity at the levels of the curriculum and pedagogical practices was observed in those classrooms.

When looking at these findings, there seems to be two kinds of transition that have arisen in this study. The first is literal: from one type of schooling to the other. The other is developmental: marking the transition from foundational writing skills to becoming a writer. This contrast makes little allowance for children who might be developing at different rates; the change simply occurs at the point at which they move from one setting to the other. This view has similarities with the findings of Vogler et al. (2008), who discussed two types of transitional concepts: vertical and horizontal. In a vertical transition there is an 'upward' shift, such as that from pre-school to primary school; and a horizontal transition represents the movements children make between the domains of their lives, outside of institutional settings. In the Turkish context, there is a literal break between the two because of the formal emphasis in primary education. In the view of Bay and Cetin (2014), this break could be caused by neglect of the fact

that school readiness is not limited to preparing children for the school culture, but also involves preparing the school for all children based on their needs and backgrounds. Based on these findings and a lack of studies addressing the transition process between pre-school and primary school education in Turkey, particularly in the context of writing, it is not possible to draw an outline of the transitional practices which should be involved in these classrooms. However, in this study I have explored how pre-school and primary school teachers design their practices and their beliefs about early writing development; therefore, I have attempted to understand the aspects of this continuity and discontinuity. It is important for teachers to support young children in the transition process from pre-school to the primary school setting, which can have a great influence on children's early adjustment. According to Margetts (2002), there are conventional skills and practical survival skills which determine successful transitions, and "these skills include the ability to work independently and to respond to behavioural expectations, length of school day, interaction with others, acceptance of rules, and class size" (p.104). However, the transition process can be managed rather better than it currently is, with an increased focus on pre-school values and aims which might still be pertinent in the primary school setting.

Both the pre-school and primary school teachers in this study associated the discontinuities between these two educational levels with their own unawareness of the culture of the other institutions (Santos, 2015), a lack of institutional support (Rantavuori, et al., 2017), curricular differences (Skouteris, et al., 2012), changes related to the physical environment in terms of providing opportunities for children (Karila & Rantavuori, 2014), different approaches adopted in classroom practices (Moss, 2008), and the diversity of children's backgrounds (Kennedy, et al., 2012). These discontinuities can create challenges for children when adapting to a new environment and responding to the complexity of the transition to primary school (Margetts, 2002).

Yet, continuity between these educational levels cannot be obtained with only one change. The teachers in the study stated that there was a lack of institutional support, especially with regards to the challenges created by the poor physical conditions of schools, which were seen as having an important influence on classroom practice. These physical environments differ between pre-school and primary classrooms in terms of classroom size, equipment provided and space in the classroom for children's

use. In pre-school classrooms there were smaller groups (11 to 15 students in each), with better equipped classrooms due to the presence of computers, smartboards and group tables, as well as assistants, whereas in the primary classrooms there were about 40 children who would sit in rows, with only one teacher, and a relatively smaller area for the children to use. This might be related to the compulsory age for education in the primary school setting, which causes a relatively lower school attendance rate in pre-schools, with approximately 58% of five year olds attending pre-school in 2017 (Egitim-Sen, 2017), and approximately 94% of children attending primary schools in 2016 (MoNE, 2016). Crowded classrooms and schools make teaching harder and extends the time needed for primary teachers to familiarise children with the classroom culture (Varol & Imamoglu, 2014). In this sense, communication between staff in the two contexts has an important role to play in developing continuity (Rantavuori, et al., 2017). The teachers in the study mentioned an electronic database called e-school, to which they have to upload documents to report children's developmental levels. However, the deficiency of this system is its inability to create communication between teachers, as it focuses instead on parent-teacher relationships (Skouteris, et al., 2012). In other words, primary teachers are not able to see what skills children have developed through pre-school, nor the current abilities of children. With a more developed system, a sharing platform for teachers and more effective planning of the transition process could be created.

In all of this interaction between these two settings, there is a core element neglected by teachers: the children themselves. Their development and experiences in early years education can make their transition to primary school education unique. All children have different levels of skills, families, expectations and abilities (Christianakis, 2011); however, there is an omission when addressing the socio-cultural backgrounds of children in terms of the teaching of writing, as this is done without focusing on children's different learning needs. The standardised feature of the schooling system is not helpful in early writing development. According to Vogler et al. (2008, p. 2), "Less attention has been paid by educational researchers to what are sometimes referred to as 'education-associated transition processes' (Fabian and Dunlop, 2007: 11), those less-formal changes in children's lives and routines that occur outside institutional settings. Nonetheless, these apparently 'peripheral' changes may in fact crucially and continuously shape children's experiences and

pathways, and be very 'central' in shaping children's life trajectory and well-being." Nutbrown (2012) argued that the transition would be smooth when handled by qualified teachers, through a special focus on the years from birth to seven years old, which could create an environment in which to build the foundations for learning.

8.5 Conclusions

The findings of this study suggest that there are similarities and differences in the understandings of early writing development in Turkish pre-school and primary school settings. In this study, pre-school and primary school teachers' beliefs about early writing can be understood as falling into two stages: pre-writing and actual writing phases, which limit their classroom practices. In addition, there are two distinct approaches to teaching children how to write: a game-based approach in the pre-school phase, and a formal approach in primary school education. This sharp distinction between the two consecutive educational phases informs classroom practices in writing instruction, as well as the transition process. Furthermore, a lack of clarity in the curriculum in defining the writing approaches in these classrooms would seem to indicate insufficiencies in practice, which then become embedded in how teachers' beliefs are reflective of the existing school practices, rather than focusing on young children's needs.

According to Bangert-Drowns et al. (2004), the expectations of writing, and the way in which it is seen and valued in the school context, have a great influence on its cognitive operation. Teachers' beliefs and understandings of early writing development determine students' responses towards writing practices: in the pre-school context, their interaction with their peers and teachers is high; whereas in primary classrooms they follow a narrowly-defined process with tightly prescribed criteria, as they are expected to do. The pre-school and primary school contexts need to focus more on what writing is and where teaching and learning writing begin in order for children to understand the aims of writing. However, redefining the process of writing should be framed with a shift towards a less structured and more child-centred approach, which will lead to flexibility in order to develop engaged writers. What remains a pertinent issue in light of this study is the impact it would have on students if they were to be given more opportunities in primary education to further develop their foundational skills before moving on to the 'actual' writing phase.

To sum up, the teachers in this study seem to have been hindered in developing their own pedagogy by a variety of factors. Some of these factors were explicitly discussed during the interviews, such as a lack of training in teaching children how to write (in the pre-school setting) – a situation created by rapid changes in the curriculum and educational policy in Turkey. Many teachers expressed the discontinuity between the two phases as a result of the lack of institutional support. The teachers also referred to the expectations of school programmes, which guide teachers to focus on writing outcomes rather than the writing process.

The implications of these issues for theory, practice, teacher development, research and policy will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9: CONCLUSION

9.1 Summary

In relation to my original research questions, this study has revealed a number of aspects of the beliefs and practices which were evident from previous studies. It has highlighted the extent to which pre-school and primary teachers' beliefs and practices in terms of early writing are rooted in the school context, as are the responses of children to both of these contexts. The findings suggest that teachers view early writing as mainly being developed in the primary context, and this view affects their practices in the classroom. In other words, the teachers in this study regarded early writing development as being too tightly specified to primary school, both in terms of practice and the expectations of readiness. While the pre-school teachers had a wider sense of what constitutes writing development, they were conflicted on the point of whether the skills they support in the classroom constitute the teaching of writing. Their understanding of early writing skills was largely dependent on developing fine-motor skills, therefore they were unable to state the substantive values related to cognitive or socio-cultural processes in supporting young writers. Moreover, students face a different setting when they transition to primary school, which is highly formal when compared to pre-school education, and they are immediately involved in structured writing instruction. This remarkable difference with regards to learning how to write not only appears to create challenges for both students and teachers in the adaptation process, but arguably has resulted in a poor understanding of where individual children are in terms of their starting point or what might constitute progress, and this lack of understanding is largely because children's progress is almost entirely understood in relation to transcription. Such practices adopted by teachers could be perceived as being designed to deliver for school and/or curriculum purposes, but young students might experience a limited understanding of the writing process on their way to becoming competent writers. Thus, while the pre-school teachers supported children's foundational writing skills in the classroom with various activities, resources and approaches, they did not necessarily possess a sufficiently rich or flexible set of beliefs about writing to support the children to move beyond this stage. Therefore, the lack of understanding of how the varied activities offered in pre-school build into early writing on the part of the pre-school teachers, and a lack of understanding of children's foundational skills on the part of the primary school teachers, have resulted in poor

transition practices between the two contexts, such that each continues to work in their own way with little understanding of a holistic picture of early writing development. These insights contribute to an understanding of teacher espoused beliefs, the resulting classroom practices and children's responses to different settings in several ways. They allow illumination of aspects of theory, have important implications for policy and practice, and have helped me to develop as a researcher and as a practitioner.

9.2 Implications for Theory

The findings in this study highlight the emphasis both pre-school and primary school teachers put on the fluency of handwriting, which is mainly associated with the development of fine-motor skills. Cognitive theories of writing, which create a link between the automatisisation process and writing development, offer insights which account for the rationales provided by the teachers during the study (Karmiloff-Smith, 1992). Similarly, their views reflect the assumption that writing progresses in untroubled and inevitable steps, from foundational practices such as drawing or scribbling to a more conventional aspect with proper use of writing rules, such as grammar and punctuation, in line with cognitive and linguistic growth, and grounded on the practices and support that children receive. The findings here reveal that five to seven year old children develop foundational writing skills in pre-school education, such as fine-motor skills and phonological awareness, with a variety of opportunities to experience print. This more natural and emergent development suggests that, with more integrated instruction, young writers might be capable of producing emergent text in a facilitated way in both the pre-school and the primary context. However, in this study, it remains unknown whether the pre-school teachers did not extend their foundational practices beyond the requirements of the curriculum, in which goals of this kind were not seen as a necessity in the pre-school context.

The teachers' explanations in this study indicate that beliefs about what writing is and how it develops, and most specifically where writing instruction actually starts, play an important role in determining the support these early years teachers provide to children. All of the teachers in the study seemed to view 'teaching' as beginning in the primary school context, which makes their understanding of 'where teaching starts' to be a part of this problem. Acknowledging that teaching starts with foundational skills might change awareness of what constitutes the teaching of writing as a more holistic

concept. While positive beliefs about their own qualifications or competence in supporting writing are associated in the literature with effective instruction and higher attainment (Galbraith & Rijlaarsdam, 1999), one of the most salient findings here was that the pre-school teachers' beliefs that teaching how to write was not their job had a direct and powerful influence on their classroom practices. In particular, the poorly informed assumptions that the teachers had made about what writing is and how it develops caused them to set unnecessary parameters on the writing processes in each context. Such misconceptions raise questions about the kind of understandings that are promoted by the curriculum and/or society, or that best serve school purposes. The findings from this study illustrate the complex interaction of the subjective and contextual factors that guide the approaches to writing support in early years' classrooms. By extension, what they demonstrate is the importance of the theorisation of different approaches from an interdisciplinary perspective in order to comprehend early years' education as a continuum, with implied cognitive, socio-cultural, and linguistic and literacy dimensions.

9.3 Implications for Policy

From an educational perspective, the findings from this study can be seen as constructive and salutary. They demonstrate the ways in which teachers can become discouraged in supporting the writing skills of children, even though they contribute to these skills in various ways. Such evidence makes a contribution to the debate over where early writing begins and how it is supported in early years classrooms. The training of early years teachers has not been effective in helping teachers in either context to support early writing development or to understand what can be counted as an early writing skill, nor do they demonstrate much awareness of the different approaches to teaching writing other than the broad concept of the traditional approach, which they associate with decontextualised activities such as writing letters on notebooks. Therefore, a rich and broad discussion is needed about what is valued in terms of writing outcomes. In many ways, the policy documents articulate a broader understanding than the teachers themselves, and this is especially so in relation to their understanding of early years education and the range and relevance of foundational skills, and in supporting the transition between the two contexts.

There is, thus, a pressing need for a consistent concept of early writing in the policy documents, drawing on theoretical and empirical research into how this is related to

the teaching of writing and to classroom practices. A more nuanced use of language which raises awareness about the complex issues raised and which explains what writing is and how it develops would be helpful, for instance, in helping teachers become more aware of how writing can be supported in the classroom with different activities. Over-simplified models of writing necessarily restrict the opportunities for teachers to reflect critically on writing instruction; therefore, teacher training should clarify this conceptual confusion. In this respect, in both contexts, teachers need policies that offer more freedom and more time to draw on a wider range of activities that do not move on to transcription too soon, and at the expense of wider developmental needs. This also reveals the need for research-informed pedagogies for early years classrooms, especially for pre-school education and for understanding and facilitating transition. At this point, it might also be suggested that teachers' views should be recognised when planning any policy which reflects the need for repositioning early writing in the publications used in teacher training programmes, and in the resources used by teachers. Given the challenging contexts in which these Turkish primary teachers work, especially in relation to class sizes, any policy that is not aware of such on-the-ground challenges is unlikely to serve teachers well, but will simply articulate idealised intentions that cannot be realised.

The findings also indicate a need for a better communication system between teachers working in the different contexts, in order for them to better understand the practices in each educational setting. With such a system, early years teachers will be able to understand what will happen in children's academic lives in the next setting and in the preceding one, and thus support children accordingly. With this obvious gap in practice identified, this could facilitate the integration of foundational skills with transcription, and could also broaden the over-emphasis on transcription in light of a broader understanding of what writing is. Furthermore, this will help to arrange early writing programmes in order to meet young writers' need for a facilitated transition from pre-school to primary school education. The findings of this research clearly illustrate that the early years' programme is sufficient neither to support students in classrooms nor to follow children's development throughout the primary years. The over-population of classrooms in primary schools creates a burden for teachers when it comes to organising their strategies based on individuals. For policy-makers, therefore, the development of a more effective model to encourage teachers to interact with each

other poses a great challenge. From the perspective of young writers and their teachers, the current arrangements serve as a barrier to effective learning, by cramping the writing process to a narrow range of fixed requirements.

9.4 Implications for Practice

At practice level, the findings from this study demonstrate the need for different approaches for students with different abilities. The pressure on and of primary school teachers to produce finished writing has resulted in a focus on writing outcomes rather than processes. This has created a constraint on children's writing, as they need to learn how to write with legible handwriting in a short period of time, which is a long-standing problem. However, effective classroom instruction based on individual abilities does not constitute a waste of time in the classroom. Teaching approaches which address the over-emphasis on writing outcomes are needed in order to support young writers' engagement and to facilitate the broader learning processes, not least the ability to compose and organise a text from disparate ideas and content, and to evaluate how effective it is in order to improve it. Opportunities for the generation and organisation of ideas, for instance, may effectively be introduced at different times during writing instruction, and not confined to the older age groups or pre-planning stages. Different activities can be integrated into classroom activities which depend on non-linear thinking, such as free writing or brainstorming, as they can help students to become involved in activities more thoughtfully and engage with the substance of writing, and alleviate the perceived problems of self-expression. With a focus on the connection between purpose and effect, teachers can evaluate the effectiveness of activities included in their classroom practices, and how they develop students' writing. However, effective writing instruction means more than integrating more flexible strategies. Students in early years classrooms are in need of a strong sense of what is valued as writing. It is absolutely necessary for young writers to have knowledge of textual possibilities and to form a shared vocabulary in order to discuss them. In this study, the students did not have any opportunities to reflect on their own thinking in their texts. Their perception of writing is likely to become shaped by their teachers' focus on handwriting and fluency. Success criteria in classrooms are needed in order to progress from handwriting to an understanding of different genres and contexts, as well as writer intentions and reader expectations. Emphasis on writing processes and the socio-cultural development of writing might help to enhance students' assumptions

about what is valued as writing. Teachers are responsible for showing how a writer chooses what they write and explaining the purpose of writing when modelling writing, rather than focusing only on the legibility of handwriting or writing outcomes. There might be classroom activities based on small or large groups to allow for self-assessment and peer review, so that students can pay attention not only to vocabulary choice and accuracy but also to writing aims. It is clear that these narrow writing instruction practices would benefit from a more holistic approach, which might be possible with a transition from the determination and monitoring of achievements under the teacher's leadership to an increase in fostering student responsibility, in order to allow students to become autonomous writers. Briefly, there is a need for teaching methods which praise writers' thinking processes rather than focusing on the fast-paced production of writing. In this way, it might be possible to support students with alternative perspectives in education and an increased dialogue in classrooms, by taking a step beyond the view which focuses only on the importance of text production.

9.5 Implications for Teacher Development

The role that early years teachers play in assisting young writers' development is significant, thus creating challenges for trainee teachers in relation to their professional development. The findings of this study indicate that pre-school teachers feel especially uncomfortable and insufficiently informed about teaching writing effectively in classrooms. There is, therefore, a clear need for training teachers to support early writing development in classrooms, which will enhance their knowledge of the subject. Professional development programmes can help teachers to cope with this feeling by introducing teachers to the current developments in research and policy, as well as encouraging them to take part in action research projects. It is also important for teachers in each context to learn about the culture of the other context in order to support students in this manner, to prepare them for the next step, to know their abilities, and to facilitate the transition process for students. In this respect, an effective system for the documentation of children's development will help teachers to follow the process and provide more guidance on organising their own classroom programmes. This also reflects the need for an effective in-service teacher development programme as a platform through which teachers can interact with each

other, in order to improve themselves in the field and to regain their confidence in terms of teaching how to write.

9.6 Implications for Future Research

This study makes a contribution to the existing knowledge of early writing development in pre-school and primary classrooms in Turkey and beyond, by exploring the relationship between what teachers believe, how these beliefs are reflected in classroom practices, and how this affects young writers. I have identified the nature of early writing instruction in classrooms, and raised questions about the adequacy of existing policy and practices in early years' education. However, this study has limitations, as it is a small study which emphasises the need for further studies in classrooms, since there is a lack of comparable contextualised research in the field. Moreover, this study took place in pre-school classrooms, which were located in a primary school, and primary classrooms; therefore, it does not represent all educational levels or what happens in these classrooms during the rest of the year. Further studies might usefully explore classroom practices to support young writers in order to inform policy. Emerging as they do from linguistic tradition, writing instruction programmes frequently neglect cognitive, socio-cultural or motivational factors, and the way in which these interact to support children in classrooms. There has not really been any interdisciplinary work on best practice in interdisciplinary contexts, and very little is known about what students can achieve in improved conditions. Much of what has been revealed in this study is especially relevant to the Turkish context, but there are themes that have broader implications, such as understanding how a professional teaching community might be at odds with policy context, and encouraging those who teach older children to be mindful of early years practices.

Future research might consider investigating the relationship between teachers' beliefs and practices, which have a direct effect on students' development. How these beliefs develop, for example, could be explored in order to understand the process from a more detailed perspective. The teachers in this study had mixed views on the value of the writing activities included in pre-school practice, suggesting an assumption that teaching writing is mainly the primary teachers' job. In this respect, further clarification is needed for teachers to understand the relationship between concepts such as foundational writing and conventional writing. Future research might also consider exploring the effectiveness of different pedagogies and/or approaches

in relation to early writing instruction, especially in different national and cultural contexts, where local and social demands might create contexts that challenge the universalist understandings of what 'good' writing pedagogy is. In particular, practices which allow students to develop the meta-language necessary to explain or defend their choices have not been widely researched (Myhill, et al., 2012) (Myhill, et al., 2016). In addition, further research might investigate the comparison of children with and without a pre-school background, in order to understand more deeply the effect of pre-school practices on children's writing development. This might include a particular emphasis on the transition period from pre-school to primary school, which this study has revealed to be especially problematic. Thus there is a particular need to understand how effective transition programmes can be applied in these two settings. Indeed, the findings of this study suggest that there is a need for a more effective orientation period at the beginning of the academic year for pre-school and primary school classrooms, which better recognises the contribution made in the foundation stage. In this study, this period was not assessed properly by the teachers in order to learn about the children's abilities or to prepare an individualised programme for the children with and without pre-school education. Further research could investigate how children respond over longer periods, for instance by following them for the whole academic year. The merits of a longitudinal approach that follows the same students across different phases, such as the approach that has been adopted for this study, might offer a useful model for understanding change in terms of both teaching and learning, and the interaction between them.

9.7 Final thoughts

Skouteris et al. (2012) note that international research emphasises how important it is that children should be supported in the transition process, in terms of when they move to primary school or when they first begin their schooling. However, there is still a variety of work that should be considered from both teachers' and children's perspectives. This could give new insights into classroom practices which might lead children to be supported better on their way to becoming writers. In conclusion, through this study I have sought to understand how early writing is supported in both pre-school and primary classrooms, using a range of methods. In this respect, this process has also offered me insights into early writing and has enabled me to

understand the place of writing development in both classrooms and in children's lives. My hope and aspiration is that this study will contribute to the dynamic discussion around the subject, and will inspire teachers, researchers and policy-makers that the particular context of Turkey has something to offer in relation to writing classrooms in the wider teaching and research community.

Appendix 1. A - Approval form from Turkey



T.C.
KAYSERİ VALİLİĞİ
İl Millî Eğitim Müdürlüğü

Sayı : 94025929-605-E.5004542
Konu: Vahide YİĞİT

13.05.2015

MİLLÎ EĞİTİM BAKANLIĞINA
(Yükseköğretim ve Yurt Dışı Eğitim Genel Müdürlüğü)

İlgi: Bakanlığımız Yükseköğretim ve Yurt Dışı Eğitim Genel Müdürlüğü'nün 12.05.2015 tarih ve 4909181 sayılı yazısı.

İlgi yazınız ile bildirilen, Bakanlığımız hesabına Abdullah Gül Üniversitesi adına Okulöncesi Eğitim alanında İngiltere'de doktora öğrenimi gören Vahide YİĞİT'e ait Kayseri'deki Okulöncesi ve İlköğretim Okullarında "Okulöncesi ve İlköğretim Düzeyindeki Çocukların Yazma Gelişimlerinin ve Aralarındaki İlişkiyi İncelemek, Öğretmenlerin Görüşlerini Almak" ile ilgili tezinin alan çalışması yapmasının Müdürlüğümüz Anket Değerlendirme Komisyonunca uygun bulunmuş olup; söz konusu çalışmanın ilimize bağlı belirlenen Okul Öncesi ve İlköğretim okullarında uygulanabileceği hususunda;

Bilgilerinize arz ederim.

Bahameddin KARAKÖSE
Vali a.
İl Millî Eğitim Müdür V.

Gültepe Mahallesi Tafas Bulvarı No:1/B Melikgazi/KAYSERİ
Elektronik Ağ: arge38@meb.gov.tr
e-posta: kayserimem@meb.gov.tr

Ayrıntılı bilgi için: N.TAŞ Şef
Tel: (0 352) 330 11 25- 1240
Faks: (0 352) 326 76 04

Bu evrak güvenli elektronik imza ile imzalanmıştır. <http://evraksorgu.meb.gov.tr> adresinden a00e-b623-3d22-bc37-656a kodu ile teyit edilebilir.



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READ THIS FORM CAREFULLY AND THEN COMPLETE IT ON YOUR COMPUTER (the form will expand to contain the text you enter). **DO NOT COMPLETE BY HAND**

Your name: Vahide YIGIT

Your student no: 630049324

Return address for this certificate:

Degree/Programme of Study: PhD in Education

Project Supervisor(s): Dr. Susan Jones
Prof. Debra Myhill

Your email address: vy205@exeter.ac.uk

Tel: +4407466242474

I hereby certify that I will abide by the details given overleaf and that I undertake in my thesis to respect the dignity and privacy of those participating in this research.

I confirm that if my research should change radically, I will complete a further form.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Vahide Yigit".

date:27.04.2015

Appendix 8: Ethical Approval Form

Certificate of ethical research approval

TITLE OF YOUR PROJECT: The influences of pre-school and primary schools on early writing development

1. Brief description of your research project:

The study aims to understand how early writing development is supported and understood in the pre-school and primary school settings in Turkey and to explore how teachers in the two settings shape writing pedagogy and how this impacts the continuity from pre-school to primary school education. I will observe 5 pre-school classrooms for 5 weeks at the end of the academic year and follow the same cohort of children in primary school for 5 weeks in the beginning of the next academic year. I will be acting as a non-participant and overt observer. 4 focus students in each class will be identified and observed for detailed analysis of what they do, what they write and how they engage with different writing activities. I will conduct semi-structured interviews with both pre-school and primary school teachers after finishing the observations to elicit their reflections about early writing development. I will also collect writing samples from children during pre-school and primary education and lesson plans from teachers to see how they prepare for early writing in each setting and how this develops over the course of the study. Subsequent to both sets of observations and interviews, a focus group including 5 pre-school and 5 primary school teachers will take place to enable them to interact with each other and articulate their opinions about young writers and practices in both pre-school and primary school context.

2. Give details of the participants in this research (giving ages of any children and/or young people involved):

5 pre-school and 5 primary school teachers (observations and interviews)

5 pre-school classrooms aged 4-5 (classroom size: 8-20)

5 primary school classrooms aged 5-7 (classroom size: approx. 20)

4 focus children from each pre-school followed into primary school (5 x 4 = 20)

Give details (with special reference to any children or those with special needs) regarding the ethical issues of:

Appendix 8: Ethical Approval Form

The researcher will not affect the day to day experience of the children but simply observe their actions in the classroom. The teachers however will participate in interviews and focus groups.

3. informed consent: Where children in schools are involved this includes both headteachers and parents). Copy(ies) of your consent form(s) you will be using must accompany this document. a blank consent form can be downloaded from the GSE student access on-line documents: **Each consent form MUST be personalised with your contact details.**

The subject population will be over 22 (who are graduated from the university and started to work), therefore the topic does not fall into any sensitive categories. Informed consent will be taken from all participants. This form explains that participants have certain rights, asks for their agreement to participate in the study and explains the protection of their rights.

To respect the children's dignity, informed consent will be obtained from their parents/carers. There will be two groups of parents/carers to be informed: (a) children in general; who I will be observing in the classroom and whose parents will have the right to remove their child's data from the study on an opt-out basis, and (b) the parents of the focus children who will be informed of my intention to observe their engagement with activities and take samples of their writing for analysis and they will be informed in order to provide consent on an opt-in basis. With this form, the researcher aims to protect children's confidentiality. Children will be informed about the research in appropriate language, so that they can have an understanding of the study.

4. anonymity and confidentiality

The researcher will explain how confidentiality and privacy will be guaranteed to everyone involved in the study. The researcher will be sensitive to the protection of information coming from observations.

Children's and teachers' personal information and identity will remain confidential except in the case of any disclosure revealing that they are at a risk.

While carrying out the interviews, fictitious names will be used in their description and in reporting the results. Participants will be given the summary of data that will be disseminated to the professional committee and every effort will be taken to ensure that it will not be possible to trace any responses to individuals

5. Give details of the methods to be used for data collection and analysis and how you would ensure they do not cause any harm, detriment or unreasonable stress:

Observation Notes: Observations will take part in two different educational phases sequentially and each will take five weeks. In the first phase, a pre-school classroom which is situated in a primary school will be observed to understand what teachers do and how children respond to writing activities

Appendix 8: Ethical Approval Form

in this setting. The researcher will conduct full participant observation, which means all children in the classroom will be involved in observations subject to informed consent. The participants will know that observations are being made and who the researcher is. A full explanation of the purpose of the study will also be given to everyone involved such as the head of the school, teachers, parents and children in line with ethical requirements. There will be five observations for each of the 5 classes involved; each will take one day in a week, which will take five weeks to complete all. These observations will be made in the last five weeks of the pre-school education before children move to the primary school. After this first phase, the researcher aims to follow the same children in the primary school.

In the second phase of the study, the researcher will observe the primary school classroom which will mostly consist of the students who move from the pre-school classroom that was observed in phase one. However, there will be new students who come from other pre-school classrooms and who did not attend the project pre-school. These new participants will also be informed of the study and given the opportunity for data in relation to these children to be removed from the project on an opt out basis. This will give the researcher the opportunity to observe both groups (those who attended and who did not attend to pre-school) and to consider any observable similarities and differences between them. These second round of observations will take place in the first five weeks of the school to observe how children deal with the writing tasks at a point before all children have become overly familiar with the new patterns of the primary school culture. It will take five weeks to complete all the observations; there will be five observations and each will take one day in a week. Full explanation will be given to everyone as for the first phase and full participant observation will be made. As with the first phase, the researcher will explain the purpose of the study to everyone involved.

Interviews: Semi-structured, in-depth interviews will be one of the main parts of the qualitative data collection. An investigation on the perceptions' of teachers about the type, purpose and impact of early writing tasks on young writers requires an understanding of the meaning that these teachers give to certain phenomena. Semi-structured interview is one of the appropriate ways of collecting data on a phenomenon which is not directly observable.

Pre-determined open-ended questions will be posed and a semi-structured interviewing format will be adopted. This will give participants the opportunity to express their own opinions using their own words (Kvale, 2007). There will also be other questions which are defined as probes during the interviews emerging from the conversation between the researcher and participants (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). With the consent of participants, all the interviews will be recorded by using a tape recorder, which will give the researcher the opportunity of transcribing the recorded interviews verbatim without missing any part.

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Documents: Children's written work (photographs or artefacts) which include the writing related activities in both pre-school and primary school will be used to inform this study on children's response to different tasks and developing writing skills in response to the pedagogy observed in both settings. These documents will cover children's writing activities relating to the play activities, emergent writing, handwriting, word building and so on, which impact early writing development. These documentary materials will be gathered from the participating schools. They will provide an understanding of the writing in school experienced by young writers in both pre-school and primary school contexts and give an insight to the similarities and differences in the way writing is experienced by young writers. Also, it will be possible to explore how children's written work is handled and valued by the teachers in these two contexts.

Focus group: In this study, there will be five pre-school teachers and five primary school teacher in one focus group as a smaller group will allow teachers to have the opportunity for open discussion and to provide feedback. The topics to be used to prompt discussion among teachers will consist of open-ended questions which are focused on the writing skills of young children. The aim of this interaction is to understand how pre-school and primary school teachers think about each other in terms of supporting writing skills in classrooms and to understand what kind of solutions they suggest to each other to support the skills of young writers. In order to record the conversations from the discussions in the focus group, the researcher will take notes by using a flip chart and record the conversation with a tape-recorder as the participants are speaking. During the discussion, the researcher will ask questions for clarification from the participants to avoid misinterpretation. Teachers will also be given an evaluation form to rate their overall experience in discussions.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis of this data proceed simultaneously in qualitative analysis which means ongoing findings may impact on the types of data collected and the way they are collected (Suter, 2012). In the qualitative phase of the study, the text data obtained through the interviews, observations and focus group, documents obtained from children's work and elicitation materials will be coded and analysed through qualitative analysis software which will be decided by the researcher. As, I will be undertaking a multi-method approach the whole process of gathering qualitative data will create a great amount of data, the immediate focus will be on reducing the mass of raw data to manageable and meaningful themes. It is important to begin the data analysis immediately since future interviews and sampling is dependent on the information coming from the first set of data. There are also more practical purposes; an unmanageable workload can be created by delaying data analysis for the researcher.

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6. Give details of any other ethical issues which may arise from this project - e.g. secure storage of videos/recorded interviews/photos/completed questionnaires, or

All the data used in the study such as interview tapes and transcripts, observation notes and children's work will be kept in locked file cabinets in the researcher's office and will be destroyed after a reasonable period of time. Also, electronic data (including text, images, video or audio) will be stored in password protected files stored on University U- Drive and as password protected documents stored on password protected stationary devices (PC and a hard drive).

7. special arrangements made for participants with special needs etc.

8. Give details of any exceptional factors, which may raise ethical issues (e.g. potential political or ideological conflicts which may pose danger or harm to participants):

This form should now be printed out, signed by you on the first page and sent to your supervisor to sign. Your supervisor will forward this document to the School's **Research Support Office** for the Chair of the School's Ethics Committee to countersign. A unique approval reference will be added and this certificate will be returned to you to be included at the back of your dissertation/thesis.

N.B. You should not start the fieldwork part of the project until you have the signature of your supervisor

This project has been approved for the period: May 2015 until: End of student registration

Susan Jones

By (above mentioned supervisor's signature): ...

date:...May 5th 2015

N.B. To Supervisor: Please ensure that ethical issues are addressed annually in your report and if any changes in the research occur a further form is completed.

GSE unique approval reference:..... D/14/15/44

P. L. D.

Signed:... ..

date:.....14.05.2015.....

Chair of the School's Ethics Committee

Appendix 1. C - Consent form for teachers

Interview on the Teachers' Beliefs on Young Writers' Skills

Dear participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the interview about young writers.

I am currently studying in the University of Exeter. My name is Vahide YIGIT and I can be contacted at vy205@hotmail.com

As a researcher, I am working on a study whereby I need to gather information on what you think about young writers' skills. I am therefore asking if you would agree to participate in my study.

The interview is designed as semi-structured and should take about 30 minutes to complete.

Purpose of the Study

This study intends to provide a better understanding of teachers' beliefs on early writing skills of children. This study will focus on this main question: *How early writing development is supported and understood in the pre-school and primary school settings?* The data collected from this study will be used to help educational researchers to understand better the impact of pre-schools and primary schools on very young children' writing skills.

Subjects' Understanding

- I agree to participate in this study that I understand will be submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of PhD at the University of Exeter.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary.
- I understand that all data collected will be limited to this use or other research-related usage as authorized by me.
- I understand that I will not be identified by name in the final product.
- I am aware that all records will be kept confidential in the secure possession of the researcher.
- I acknowledge that the contact information of the researcher and her advisor have been made available to me along with a duplicate copy of this consent form.
- I understand that the data I will provide are not be used to evaluate my performance as a teacher in any way.
- I understand that I may withdraw from the study at any time with no adverse repercussions.

Subject's Full Name: _____

Subject's Signature: _____ Date Signed: _____

Appendix 1. D – Consent form for families

Project title: The influences of pre-school and primary schools on early writing development

Focus Children Parent/Guardian Informed Consent

The purpose of the study

Your child is being asked to participate in a study conducted by Vahide YIGIT from the University of Exeter. The aim of this study is to understand *how early writing development is supported and understood in the pre-school and primary school settings*. This study will contribute to the researcher's completion of her PhD thesis.

Research procedures

Should you decide to allow your child to participate in this research study, you will be asked to sign this consent form once all your questions have been answered to your satisfaction. This study consists of an observation that will be administered to individual participants in.. Audio or video tapes will take place in this study within the scope of ethical considerations to the dignity of life.

The researcher will record in detail the participation of four children and I hope you will be happy for your child to be one of these focus children. This will involve the researcher noting what they do and what they write when participating in writing activities. Your child will be observed for his/her engagement with activities and take sample of his/her writing for analysis.

Time required

Participation in this study will require one-day observation of your child's time once a week and it will totally complete in five weeks.

Risks

The investigator does not perceive more than minimal risks from your child's involvement in this study (that is, no risks beyond the risks associated with everyday life).

Benefits

Potential benefits from participation in this study include the potential for educational research to better understand how to improve the writing skills of young children. With this information, it will be possible to know *how early writing development is supported and understood in the pre-school and primary school settings how teachers shape writing pedagogy and how this impacts the continuity from pre-school to primary school education*. The activities that teachers do in the classroom to support these skills will be explored and the results will be used to understand how it can be used for the benefit of children. It will be beneficial for future research as well.

Confidentiality

The results of this research may be presented at my university, at conferences or as a research paper. The results of this project will be reported in such a way that the

respondent's identity nor that of the school will not be attached to the final form of this study. The researcher retains the right to use and publish non-identifiable data. . While individual responses are confidential, aggregate data will be presented representing averages or generalizations about the responses as a whole. All data will be stored in a secure location accessible only to the researcher. Upon completion of the study, all information that matches up individual respondents with their answers will be destroyed.

Participation & Withdrawal

Your child's participation is entirely voluntary. He/she is free to choose not to participate. Should you and your child choose to participate, he/she can withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Questions about the Study

If you have questions or concerns during the time of your child's participation in this study, or after its completion or you would like to receive a copy of the final aggregate results of this study, please contact:

Researcher's Name

Advisor's Name

Vahide YIGIT

Giving of Consent

I have read this consent form and I understand what is being requested of my child as a participant in this study. I freely consent for my child to participate. I have been given satisfactory answers to my questions. The investigator provided me with a copy of this form. I certify that I am at least 18 years of age.

Name of Child (Printed)

Name of Parent/Guardian (Printed)

Name of Parent/Guardian (Signed)

Date

Name of Researcher (Signed)

Date

1. The template will be used from the website:
www.jmu.edu/sponsprog/irb/irb_Consent_Parent-Guardian.doc.
 Appendix 2. A – Interview example with pre-school teachers

Topic domain: The impact of early writing tasks involvement on young writers

Lead off question 1: could you please tell me how is writing part of all the different things you do in pre-school?

[Covert categories of interest: Different activities related to writing – play based, table top activities (jigsaws, sorting activities), formal instruction]

Possible follow up questions:

1. What do children learn in pre-school in terms of writing?
2. What do you do to support young writers? How does what you do help them learn?
3. What do you think is easy about supporting young writers? What is difficult?

Lead off question 2: could you please tell me which writing skills do you think children learn in pre-school education?

[Covert categories of interest: Writing skills of children in pre-school]

Possible follow up questions:

1. Do you think there is any difference between the writing skills of children who attended and who did not attend to pre-school?
2. How would you describe the journey of learning to write?
3. What are the skills a young writer needs?
4. Do all children develop the skills for writing in the same order?

Lead off question 3: could you please tell me how do you support children in the process of writing in pre-schools?

[Covert categories of interest: What pre-school teachers do to support the writing skills, the aim of improving these skills?]

Possible follow up questions:

1. What do you think are the typical writing skills of:
 - a. A child arriving in pre-school
 - b. A child leaving pre-school
 - c. A child arriving in primary school with no pre-school experience
 - d. Children at the end of the primary phase of education
2. What do you think is the aim of improving writing skills in pre-schools? How do these skills affect children in when they go to primary school? How do you think pre-school provision might differ from primary school provision?
3. In what way, if at all, does pre-school provision prepare young writers for primary school? What is lost if children don't have pre-school support in early writing?

Lead off question 4: could you please tell me what is the role of primary school teachers in enhancing children' writing skills?

[Covert categories of interest: Primary school teachers]

Possible follow up questions:

1. Which writing tasks do you think primary school teachers employ to support the skills children developed in pre-schools? How might these differ from pre-school tasks?
2. Which skills do you think should be acquire in early childhood education so that children learn writing easily / comfortably?

Appendix 2.a – Interview example with pre-school teachers

Topic domain: The impact of early writing tasks involvement on young writers

Lead off question 1: could you please tell me how is writing part of all the different things you do in pre-school?

[Covert categories of interest: Different activities related to writing – play based, table top activities (jigsaws, sorting activities), formal instruction]

Writing skills enable children's muscles to develop more. For example, even with a child who never holds a pencil and a child whose pencil is always in his hand, there are differences between them. For example, even my 2-year-old son can hold a pen properly, even if he is only 2 years old, or maybe not. As we make them to use the pen, they get used to it. When we never give it otherwise, he first learns to hold the pencil. This phase is different, of course. After that, for example, when you constantly study lines and you have other literacy activities; of course, the child is making the lines look smoother with their developed muscles in time, whereas their lines are slightly more skewed at the beginning. How about when they pass to primary school here? They can write the letters, more precisely sounds, better in the first time.

Possible follow up questions:

4. What do children learn in pre-school in terms of writing?

What are they learning? They learn the numbers, they learn the concepts. They learn concepts such as big-small, small-lot, and so on. They learn shapes. They also learn them as behaviors. For example, good-bad, true-false. They also learn more about literacy.

5. What do you do to support young writers? How does what you do help them learn?

I mean, like I said, I'm doing line works in the first place. We do this line work all year round. I'm cutting down it towards the end of the year because the muscles of children become more developed. In the beginning, perhaps as children are new to the school, they are getting tired quickly. We start activities with line work it is challenging for young children. We turn these activities into painting over time. After painting, we can play some literacy activities. I mean, we as teachers can also support writing skills as a game. We can make it more fun by playing it in the same way, not just with a paper pen. For example, we can teach shapes on paper and with play dough. Like we did today, I supported it with the dough. We

can give it as a game. We have a lot of examples of gaming the writing activities, actually. I wish you had come every once in a while, since the beginning of the year. You would see it more clearly. I mean, we did some really cool games. For example, I put three shapes, side by side. It was equal to the opposite. I wanted children to put the object in the middle to the opposite side. They were finding it within the shapes. They were learning both shapes, and you could also teach them colors with this game. It can be given in different ways. For example, it can be given with music. With music, colors can be taught, numbers can be taught. So it is not necessary to call it as a literacy activity and take it in a narrow frame. For example, not only with pen paper or line work. But it can also be taught with games.

6. What do you think is easy about supporting young writers? What is difficult?

I find the easiest thing as supporting them through playing. Maybe you have seen it. For example, when I teach a number 4 as 4, and instruct them as “you will do or draw like this”, children could not keep how to do it in their minds. But, for example, when I say "ski, run and jump", the instructions stay in their minds, so these instructions immediately come to their minds and children can write down when they are asked. Thus they are guided correctly through this way. For example, children can do numbers reverse or they can write them in opposite direction. But as I told you, they do it more accurately when they are instructed in funny way. For example, you know the four, sometimes they write it in the opposite direction. But when we say “ski and run”. You know, running is always forward. Normally you can not run to back. The kids think about it and say that if the run is to the forward, that is, when they make their writings based on it and they do it right. With this way, I turn writing activities into games.

What is the most difficult about teaching writing? I think the most difficult is to bring together what you taught before. I think in this way. We should be careful not to be boring when we are actually doing an activity. The telephone activity last time was a bit boring, for example, there was a line work, there was painting and the numbers were supposed to be written by children. When we give an activity like this to a child requiring so many things at the same time, the child does not want to do it and get bored, of course. We need to pay attention to these. They are enjoying it more when we play it, not on paper. For example, if you think in the memory game, ‘find the same shape’ game. When they do it with the game, it is both more permanent and easier for the moment and children can have fun with the activities.

Lead off question 2: could you please tell me which writing skills do you think children learn in pre-school education?

[Covert categories of interest: Writing skills of children in pre-school]

We do not teach sounds in preschool, but we do in this way: I do not teach how to print sounds on paper, but I teach the sounds in the following way: 'Here is what might be around us which begins with the voice' ö ' or starts with the voice' a '. We only give this as visual artwork, but we do not print it on paper. I support it like this.

I leave supporting children with writing their own names to the second term. Writing his/her own name is, in fact, I do not know how true for them to learn it. After all, when children go to primary school, they write a little more oblique writing and how they say, their writing is different. It's italic, a little more, of course, what they call it, cursive script handwriting, the handwriting I can teach here. So I'm not that much after all, I do not know much about handwriting because I'm not a primary school teacher. In that way, I can teach children how to write in plain (not cursive) writing. It will cause children when they go to primary school, they will have a little more difficulty when they begin to learn how to write with cursive scripts. But what can I do instead of that, there are a variety of hand-drawn line studies. For example, internally threaded rings. We are already starting with straight line studies. It's a straight, slash line. I think it will be more beneficial to children when we teach how to do lines. I do not know if it is right to teach how to write their names. But I did not observe much harm to the ones who write their own names.

Possible follow up questions:

5. Do you think there is any difference between the writing skills of children who attended and who did not attend to pre-school?

There is, there is more than enough. Because, as I said, I mean, the children are developing their muscles (motor skills) before formal schooling in the pre-school setting. Far from the development of their motor skills, the kids get used to it. For example, a teacher in a primary school, as I said here, we are already beginning with a cursive writing, children will be able to do them more quickly when they go to primary school. Or the children will write more correctly when writing something because it was done beforehand. Even in a painting activity. When they first arrived here, they were smearing normally and always painting out of the picture. For example, if they paint a picture right now, they do it better, and even fine details can

be painted better. Even I do not say that, not to miss it out, but children feel more used to it, because their motor skills are more developed.

Lead off question 3: could you please tell me how do you support children in the process of writing in pre-schools?

[Covert categories of interest: What pre-school teachers do to support the writing skills, the aim of improving these skills?]

Possible follow up questions:

4. What do you think are the typical writing skills of:
 - e. A child arriving in pre-school and A child leaving pre-school

When children first started, they can not write anything. First we teach them how to hold a pencil, we spend some time with it. For example, when the child first starts, we do not give scissors right away. In the first week they are just scribbling. They do line work like I said, they play with dough for a while. We're trying to make them to use scissors in a week or two after we've activities with scribbling and line works. When a child who has just started to the school is doing this, the child who graduated from pre-school can now write on his own. But in the beginning, of course, they can not write numbers because they do not know how to write. But now they can use those numbers as a whole in an activity. For example, they can think and write the missing figures themselves. They can do 'what is before, what is next' activities. When I ask the number after a number, they can give a clear answer, they think a little bit about the number coming before at the beginning, but they can still give an answer. It does affect the thinking time as well through accelerating it. Additional comment from me: I noticed something else, you wrote 100 with the dough. In fact, it was not something taught in class, but they were able to deduce themselves.

Children will quickly understand what they see. Not what they hear, but they quickly comprehend what they see. We tell children something, but when we say it, children can not imagine what we are talking about. For example, we show Anitkabir in the picture. We show what Ataturk is doing, but the child does not understand much when we tell him. But when we show her pictures or tell her in some way, with

videos, the child can remember it permanently. It's even better when they see themselves instead of showing it. For example, I have a student. This is probably his third trip to Anitkabir. He had never gone to Anitkabir at the beginning of the year. He says he sees different things every time he goes, so he tells different stories. For example, after the first trip he says 'teacher, I saw the place you told us'. In the second, he says, 'I saw how the soldiers were displaced'. The child is looking for something different when he sees it and really finds it.

- f. A child arriving in primary school with no pre-school experience and children at the end of the primary phase of education

Primary school teachers know it better but of course there is a difference. Ultimately, the first-class teacher prepares herself for these children. Though there used to be something as failing in the class in the past. At the very least, the kids were able to have a class again as a second time. Now that the children can not fail in the classroom, the illiterate child goes straight to the second class. Actually, I do not think it's right. For example, I have two students this year. For example, two students are the same. They have same skills about how they do activities. The way they participate in the events, the way of doing activities are the same, but I can say one is ready for the primary school whereas I can not say to the other that he/she is ready to primary school. I suggest one to continue to kindergarten for another year. He can actually write better than the other. Writing is not a problem, but some children get bored very quickly. Especially boys are getting tired when they go to 2nd year. They hit him with disgrace. They want a little more play. This is same with primary school children. In general, pre-school children become more involved in activities, but primary school students want to play games after a while. It is now more difficult for them to actually print on paper in some way. It was the same in kindergarten, but the first-year students have more difficulties. They should write through playing games. If teachers have emptied the energy of children in the primary school, and if children have a good pre-school background, the children become ready for the second class.

5. What do you think is the aim of improving writing skills in pre-schools? How do these skills affect children in when they go to primary school? How do you think pre-school provision might differ from primary school provision?

6. In what way, if at all, does pre-school provision prepare young writers for primary school? What is lost if children don't have pre-school support in early writing?

Lead off question 4: could you please tell me what is the role of primary school teachers in enhancing children' writing skills?

[Covert categories of interest: Primary school teachers]

Possible follow up questions:

3. Which writing tasks do you think primary school teachers employ to support the skills children developed in pre-schools? How might these differ from pre-school tasks?

I think children's writing skills are supported in primary school. For example, most of our work we do take place in primary school. The activities take place less. If there are more paper works in primary school, for example, it would actually be better for children. If you ask why, there are children who attend to pre-school, but there are children who do not. If you think, for example, the child already sees a variety of things in kindergarten. He sees a range of activities, learns the numbers, learns the shapes, but the other child sees nothing. Children suddenly transit into primary school with a high excitement. But they get there, they understand that they always write numbers, dealing with letters, and constantly studying. I think this is wrong. I think a primary school student should spend time with playing first, particularly in the first year of formal schooling. Of course, in the second term, they should be more prone to reading and writing now, I do not suggest to always play games but teachers are squeezing too much in primary school.

4. Which skills do you think should be acquire in early childhood education so that children learn writing easily / comfortably?

In fact, they do so much things in primary school education. They do a lot of homework. I am against of it. Children are already doing what they need to do in school. What can they do? At home they can do something like this: Do you want to teach something a lot? In a playful way, they can sit together with their parents and do it. I want this. Parents should spend more time with their children. Kids watch TV too much. I mean they watch too much. As you can see now, what is said in cartoons is now a memorized by children. The child is bored with it. What will they do at home? There's nothing kids can do at home. Either they will break something or will disperse things around. Or sit and watch cartoons. That's not what every kid does. Some kids love it and others do not. What are they doing? Parents: "OOff I am

bored now, enough" shouted at them which they have absolutely no right to shout. After all, that kid has a certain energy, and you have to unload it. He needs his attention. We do not have it as Turkish families. I mean, parents do not give attention to children as much as children need. If 5 minutes is spent for that child, the child will already give parents 2 hours. They say, for example, 'üff, enough now, you are boring'. But the boy wants that attention. If you spend time with him for 5 minutes or answer a question, he sure is never infected to you. I am sure you have noticed in the school, children ask very ridiculous questions. But what I can do is answering. Sometimes I can not answer to some questions. If you do not, children become very introverted. For example, in our class, you did not see him, there is Muhammad Ali. At the beginning of the year there is a lot of difference between the child with he is now. He never talked when he arrived, I did not even hear the tone until the end of the first term. He's being naughty right now. He can express himself. I like naughty children. I really love them, they are so cute.

Children are more free and confident in class. I want this. I want children to be free and confident. I always say, I treat them the same way I grow my own child. Because my child will go to kindergarten. I would like his teacher to be like me.

Appendix 2. B – Interview protocol with primary teachers

Topic domain: The impact of early writing tasks involvement on learning writing in primary school

Lead off question 1: could you please tell me how is writing part of all the different things you do in primary school?

[Covert categories of interest: Different activities related to writing – play based, table top activities (jigsaws, sorting activities), formal instruction]

Possible follow up questions:

1. What do children learn in primary school in terms of writing?
2. What do you do to support young writers? How does what you do help them learn?
3. What do you think is easy about supporting young writers? What is difficult?
4. What do young writers find especially easy/difficult?
5. What do young writers enjoy/not enjoy about writing?
6. What do you do to support struggling writers?
7. What do you do to stretch able writers?

8. How would you describe the journey of learning to write?

9. What are the skills a young writer needs?

10. Do all children develop the skills for writing in the same order?

Lead off question 2: could you please tell me which writing skills do you think children learn in pre-school education?

[Covert categories of interest: Writing skills in pre-school]

Possible follow up questions:

6. Is there any difference between the writing skills of children who attended and who did not attend to pre-school?

Lead off question 3: could you please tell me how do you support children in the process of writing in primary schools?

[Covert categories of interest: Writing skills in primary school]

Possible follow up questions:

7. What do you think are the typical writing skills of:
 - g. A child arriving in pre-school
 - h. A child leaving pre-school
 - i. A child arriving in primary school with no pre-school experience
 - j. Children at the end of the primary phase of education

8. Do you notice any differences in the leading needs of children with or without pre-school experience? Do you notice any differences in relation to the teaching children with or without pre-school experience?

9. How do you support children with different backgrounds in the process of learning how to write?

Lead off question 4: could you please tell me what is the role of pre-school teachers in enhancing children' writing skills?

[Covert categories of interest:]

Possible follow up questions:

5. Which writing (pre-writing) tasks do you think pre-school teachers should employ so that they help children learn writing much more easily late in primary schools?
6. Which skills do you think should be acquired in early childhood education so that children learn writing more easily / comfortably?

Appendix 2.B – Interview example with the teacher from Primary School A

Topic domain: The impact of early writing tasks involvement on learning writing in primary school

Lead off question 1: could you please tell me how is writing part of all the different things you do in primary school?

[Covert categories of interest: Different activities related to writing – play based, table top activities (jigsaws, sorting activities), formal instruction]

I support these skills with different games to make the kids love writing, because the writing and reading skills are already in sync. I can show you a bingo game as a different activity of writing. Meaningful sentences can be created by the words in the bingo game as an example of writing activity.

Possible follow up questions:

11. What do children learn in primary school in terms of writing?

We start teaching writing with letters. We teach the children how to write cursive script letters beforehand and the places where the letters are added. After that, we start teaching punctuation marks by establishing meaningful sentences.

12. What do you do to support young writers? How does what you do help them learn?

We read and write together in parallel. With plenty of work of dictation, it is aimed to increase the practicality of the students in writing.

13. What do you think is easy about supporting young writers? What is difficult?

The hardest thing about teaching writing is developing writing skills of the children who are in the age of school but their hand muscles (fine motor skills) are not developed to write. The easiest thing about supporting writing is to guide students who have sufficient readiness for writing. After a few examples, you just guide them; not teach how to write.

Lead off question 2: could you please tell me which writing skills do you think children learn in pre-school education?

I think pre-school education is very important and necessary to improve the writing skills of children. Beside that the children are prepared to write cognitively, they begin to the primary education with their the fine motor skills developed, oriented to the school environment, and with an increased awareness.

Possible follow up questions:

7. Is there any difference between the writing skills of children who attended and who did not attend to pre-school?

There is a difference in the writing of students between who have not received pre-school education and have not received support or guidance from their parents in this regard and others in the sense of negative effects. I think that parents who support the pre-school education and provide their children with it provide great contributions to their children's writing skills.

Lead off question 3: could you please tell me how do you support children in the process of writing in primary schools?

[Covert categories of interest: Writing skills in primary school]

I use treating a lot for children to love reading and writing. In addition, I try to evaluate each child on their own. As the development level of each child is different from each other, I try to set the goal to support it based on these levels. But, as we have seen, the physical condition of our school is very unfavorable and I try to overcome the negative consequences of being a single teacher in a class.

Possible follow up questions:

10. What do you think are the typical writing skills of:

k. A child arriving in pre-school

Well, writing skills have not developed yet, the fine motor skills must develop. The skill to hold pencil (psychomotor) is not sufficient as well.

l. A child leaving pre-school

They must have gained the skill of pen-holding and line-drawing. Fine-motor skills are strengthened.

m. A child arriving in primary school with no pre-school experience

I think they start behind compared with other children.

n. Children at the end of the primary phase of education

Now that they have gained the skills of writing, but still have the skills to be developed. I should mention that they can not read and write stories, can not express themselves effectively through writing and also, they can not write complicated and complex sentences as well. I think they have developed these skills along with cognitive skills.

11. Do you notice any differences in the leading needs of children with or without pre-school experience? Do you notice any differences in relation to the teaching children with or without pre-school experience?

Of course, there are differences in the beginning of the primary education. However, except for a few children, the students usually reach to the others. Already in a class of 40, if you do not keep developmental levels at the same level, some of them will be more advantageous and others will be in a disadvantageous position. This means that you will not have equal opportunity in education.

12. How do you support children with different backgrounds in the process of learning how to write?

The children are assessed based on their learning readiness. More guidance is being given to the needy students.

Lead off question 4: could you please tell me what is the role of pre-school teachers in enhancing children' writing skills?

We expect from pre-school teachers that when the children arrive to the first year of the primary school they must be keeping the pencils in a right way with developed fine motor skills. So, I think that the work done in the early part of the school about these two areas of development has provided a very large contribution to our 1st grade teachers.

7. Which writing (pre-writing) tasks do you think pre-school teachers should employ so that they make children learn writing much more easily late in primary schools?

It is necessary to develop children's fine motor skills through playing with play doughs and their behaviors for holding pen.

8. Which skills do you think should be acquire in early childhood education so that children learn writing easily / comfortably?

I think that children who developed their fine-motor skills and make progress in language development are much more comfortable learning to write.

Appendix 2. C – Focus group interview (First 2 pages)

Ayhan: As our school is a central school, most of our students come from outside. The number of students coming from kindergarten in our own school is either 2 or 3, I mean not more than 5. I mean, there is such a distress. We have school bus, it is like a service for all children coming from outside. In general, when students come from outside, they all come from different schools. Therefore, we do not have the opportunity to communicate with our friends – face-to-face.

Ferhat: In other words, it should be difficult for students but what teachers expect from students should be same in everywhere. If the child will go to another school from here, if the kindergarten teachers prepare the student accordingly, the student from the outside/the other schools will come in a better way to you.

Ayhan: There is a problem. I mean, I say: At the beginning of the year we have in-service trainings. We have our trainings at the beginning of the year. We have training studies. It's an empty period.

Ferhat: What do we expect from the children? How do they come? How can these problems be solved? What can you give? What can we add? Actually, it may work in some way, in a coordinated way.

Ayhan: Actually, we are also open. I mean, we are hungry for the development as well. We are also open to new information. Friends are also open but we are not doing anything like this: we are not innovative. I mean, I come here to the school and I go back. I already have problems in my house. I have problems in school. The student count is crowded. Am I going to deal with that? Anyway, I'm doing what I know. Now, I'm sure you know about the new curriculum, you should have already researched about it. The new curriculum is student-centred. A student-centred system guided by the teacher. Actually, the system is good. When looked at it from the outside, especially from the point of old teachers' views, it looks like a hollow system, but it is a system that pushes the student to the forefront, to thinking, and to ensure that students participate in activities. What's it doing? In fact, what we need to do, we will guide and the student will do everything. When we think about that old one, it's empty (the system). What are we doing? We are constantly uploading new information. Because we are in a race and we are loading information. Parents want it. Parent want it. The system actually wants it. Because, for example, Teog (National exam for passing to the high school). They just took Teog yesterday.

Hakan: The system actually wants the other and shows it, but on the other side, (students) have to choose the competition.

Tuncer: It does not look at if teaching is student-centered. It's looking at what children are learning.

Ayhan: The system has given me a new program but has not trained the teachers. It did not train the teachers to adapt to the program. It says that (policy-makers) I changed the system, I installed a new program, but did not train the teachers. The following system is the continuation of the old system. A system based on information is required. Parent is aware of this; the teacher is aware of it. We are now suspended. What shall we do? I say, let it be student centred. I want students to express themselves, I want them to be confident and stand on their own feet.

Previously, we asked a couple of questions in Turkish lessons. (There was only) one

answer. Ask 30 different children, get 30 different answers. No, not that, correct it. That's the right answer. Now we accept all 30 answers as correct, but it is the system which requires this. You are looking at the questions, on the other side (in exams).

Hakan: We looked at the questions yesterday. They asked high school level questions to junior school students. Believe me, they are not in the schedule. There are questions about leverage, there are questions about unified cables. Science questions, Turkish questions. In other words, National Education itself asks this.

Ayhan: None of them have been processed during the year. You call it innovation here, you say something.

Me: You mean, the given education and the expected things..

Hakan: It's almost always the same way.

Ayhan: There is a problem here, as well. It is very problematic for us to get together.

Ferhat: Yes, this is right.

Tuncer: We need radical changes.

Ayhan: The radical changes are really needed in everywhere. I think, what is the spirit of a nation, of a state? 'National' education. You say that it is 'national'.

Tuncer: We don't have a national education. We don't.

Ayhan: What is on the top? It's education, but there is no education.

Me: Especially, in the classrooms..

Hakan: It is taken from there, from another place. So, it doesn't fit.

Me: I saw that there are teachers who work with 40 children in a class as half of this place.

Hakan: I see, I see.

Tuncer: This school was same previously. We were teaching as a single teacher in the classroom.

Ferhat: (When I was in primary school), We were 82 in the class.

Ayhan: You can lose children in that way. You can not teach anything to children in that way.

Me: Yes, is it suitable for their developments?

Fatma: Nothing happens. The whole education is wrong in my opinion.

Tuncer: When you see the garden, the child does not have enough space. These are all factors. It does not matter if it's the first class or the kindergarten. It must be a radical change that a national system can be acquired.

Me: So, is there anything like? I am asking this question in relation to the writing development as it is our subject today, are you pushing children in the class? I mean, the hand muscles of the finger muscles develop very quickly, learn to write very quickly, learn the letters, construct sentences.

Hakan: We have a 15-day line making period.

Appendix 2. D - The relationship between the interview questions and the research questions

Research Questions	Interview Questions
<p>1. What is the relationship between teachers' beliefs about early writing development and classroom culture and practices, in both pre-school and the first year of primary education?</p>	<p>Lead off question 1: could you please tell me how is writing part of all the different things you do in pre-school/primary school?</p> <p><u>Lead off question 3:</u> could you please tell me how do you support children in the process of writing in pre-schools/primary education?</p> <p><u>Lead off question 4:</u> could you please tell me what is the role of primary school/pre-school teachers in enhancing children' writing skills?</p>
<p>2. How do these classroom cultures and practices impact children's writing behaviour?</p>	<p><u>Lead off question 2:</u> could you please tell me which writing skills do you think children learn in pre-school/primary education?</p>

Appendix 2. E- Coded interview extract (NVivo screen capture)

PHD Data Analysis.nvp - NVivo Pro

FILE HOME CREATE DATA ANALYZE QUERY EXPLORE LAYOUT VIEW

Navigation View Find Quick Coding Detail View Workspace

Dock All Undock All Close All Bookmarks Close Window

Zoom Layout List View Coding Highlight Relationships Links Annotations See Also Links Framework Matrix Classification Report Previous Next Reference Visualization

Sources

Look for Search In Interviews Find Now Clear Advanced Find

Internals

- Children's works
 - Focus group interview
 - Interviews
 - Lesson Plans
 - Observations
- Externals
 - Memos
 - Framework Matrices

Interviews

Name	Nodes	References
Preschool A Interview	31	57
Preschool B Interview	28	61
Preschool C Interview	26	83
Primary School A Interview	21	46
Primary School B Interview	25	53
Primary School C Interview	26	59
School A1	0	0
School A2	0	0
School A3	0	0

Preschool A Interview Preschool C Interview

Click to edit

[Covert categories of interest: Different activities related to writing – pl activities (jigsaws, sorting activities), formal instruction]

Yazma becerileri çocukların kaslarının daha fazla gelişmesini sağlıyor. Mesela çocukla sürekli elinde kalem verilen bir çocukla bile aralarında farklılıklar olur 2 yaşındaki oğlum bile, 2 yaşında olmasına rağmen, hatta değil bile, düzgün tutabiliyor. Çünkü kalemi sürekli vere vere biraz daha alışıyorlar. Diğer türlü önce kalemi tutmayı öğreniyor. Bu evre farklı geçiyor tabii. Ondan sonra mesela çalışmaları olsun, diğer okuma yazma etkinlikleri olsun. Tabii ki çocuk, kasları birlikte başta birazcık daha yumuk yaparken çizgileri daha düzgün yapıyor. Bu geçişinde nasıl olur? Harfleri daha doğrusu, harfleri demeyim sesleri yazarken yazabilir yani.

Writing skills enable children's muscles to develop more. For example, never holds a pencil and a child whose pencil is always in his hand, the between them. For example, even my 2-year-old son can hold a pen precisely only 2 years old, or maybe not. As we make them to use the pen, they never give it otherwise, he first learns to hold the pencil. This phase is of course, the child is making the lines look smoother with their development whereas their lines are slightly more skewed at the beginning. How about primary school here? They can write the letters, more precisely sounds,

Possible follow up questions:

1. What do children learn in pre-school in terms of writing?

Classifying Density

Understanding of different children writing needs

Teacher beliefs about learning

Class of improvement of profession

Attention span

Making lines

Focus on practical activity

Teaching function

Cognitive development

Preschool teachers' views about primary teachers

The boundaries of pre-school support

Importance of pre-school education

Common practices

Awareness of children's difficulties

Writing in the home

Beliefs about culture of the other institution

Teacher beliefs about learning

Awareness of foundational writing skills

Fine motor skills

Holding pencil skills

Motor development

Evidence of development

9 Items Nodes: 26 References: 83 Read-Only Line: 301 Column: 25

14:07 22/06/2018

Appendix 3. A- An example of observation notes (Pre-school A example)

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL (DATE: 18 May 2015 (First Day))

In the first day, I introduced myself to children in the classroom and tried to observe children to choose four of them for the further phases.

Total students: 14

Special needs: 1 (generally working alone during activities) with speech disorder. 47 months old with adaptation problems.

1 with attention deficit: Teacher talked about his problems with his family. His parents were divorced and he was living with his mother. His father refused to see and/or help him in any kind (no financial or emotional existence). So, his mother has to work in the mornings and she locks him inside because she doesn't effort any kind of care. He has so many problems with authority or adolescents and cries too much. The teacher said that she has done everything to change his situation like talking with directors or his mother but couldn't solve the problem. She sometimes shouts at him and I have so many ethical conflicts about what to do for him?

2 other children have family problems and the other 2 started to the school very late.

One of children came from Afghanistan. She can talk and understand Turkish nowadays, according to the teacher, she has improved her language very fast.

There are 1 teacher and 1 assistant in the classroom.

CLASS:

(Activities/tasks, materials used, organization etc.)

They started the day with free time and after all children came to the classroom, they had breakfast together. During the breakfast, children had some conversations and four girls were discussing about how to count numbers with their fingers (eg: $2+3=5$, $5-4=1$).

As a whole class activity, the teacher started with drawings by using crayons. After discussing about colours in the beginning, one sample was shown by the teacher and asked students to copy colours.

The second activity was based on the book that they use in the classroom. Some of children worked with numbers – they counted, wrote the numbers inside the bubbles in the book. Some of children did some painting activities with different colours. After that, children went to the assistant to discuss about their work but it wasn't organised. Some children were distracted.

FOCUS CHILDREN: Note what each child does/says when engaged in writing activities, comment on how they engage, take photos of any writing they produce

1. I noticed that one child was trying to write her own name in somewhere on the book. I thought that she was aware of her own name and letters, therefore I decided to pick her to follow in further phases.

2. He scribbled all over some pictures in his book. Besides, he wrote some of numbers in the opposite site. I wanted to follow him to see how he will be supported.
3. She wrote the numbers in opposite site as well. Besides, she was left-handed.
4. She could hold the pen in the right way. Her paintings were pretty well, she was aware of the lines.

END OF THE DAY

Children are free to walk around in the classroom in activity times and they can go out and come in without permission/information.

When children ask any question to me, I answered. Otherwise, I did not involve in any activities.

They are also preparing for the year end show.

TEACHER REFLECTION:

At the beginning of the year, they decided to use different books for each child with different developmental levels for their writing development. The National Ministry of Education designed a book for preschools but the teacher finds it really difficult to use for all children. Children are at different ages, their ages differ from 4 - 6.5.

TEACHER'S COMMENTS ON WRITING: She tries to improve children's cognitive and motor skills to get them ready for the writing phase. They write numbers in the classroom and they do some drawings, paintings and some art activities to develop children's fine-motor skills. According to the teacher, children do not have enough support at home. Parents see preschools as playgrounds. The teacher feels under pressure because of insufficient support.

ETHICAL CONFLICTIONS: Children are aware of the camera and their behaviours change because of it. So, I'll try to put it in somewhere that does not affect children.

Appendix 3. B - Observation schedule

OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

CLASS:

Activities/tasks, materials used, organization etc.

FOCUS CHILDREN: Note what each child does/says when engaged in writing activities, comment on how they engage, take photos of any writing they produce

1.

2.

3.

4.

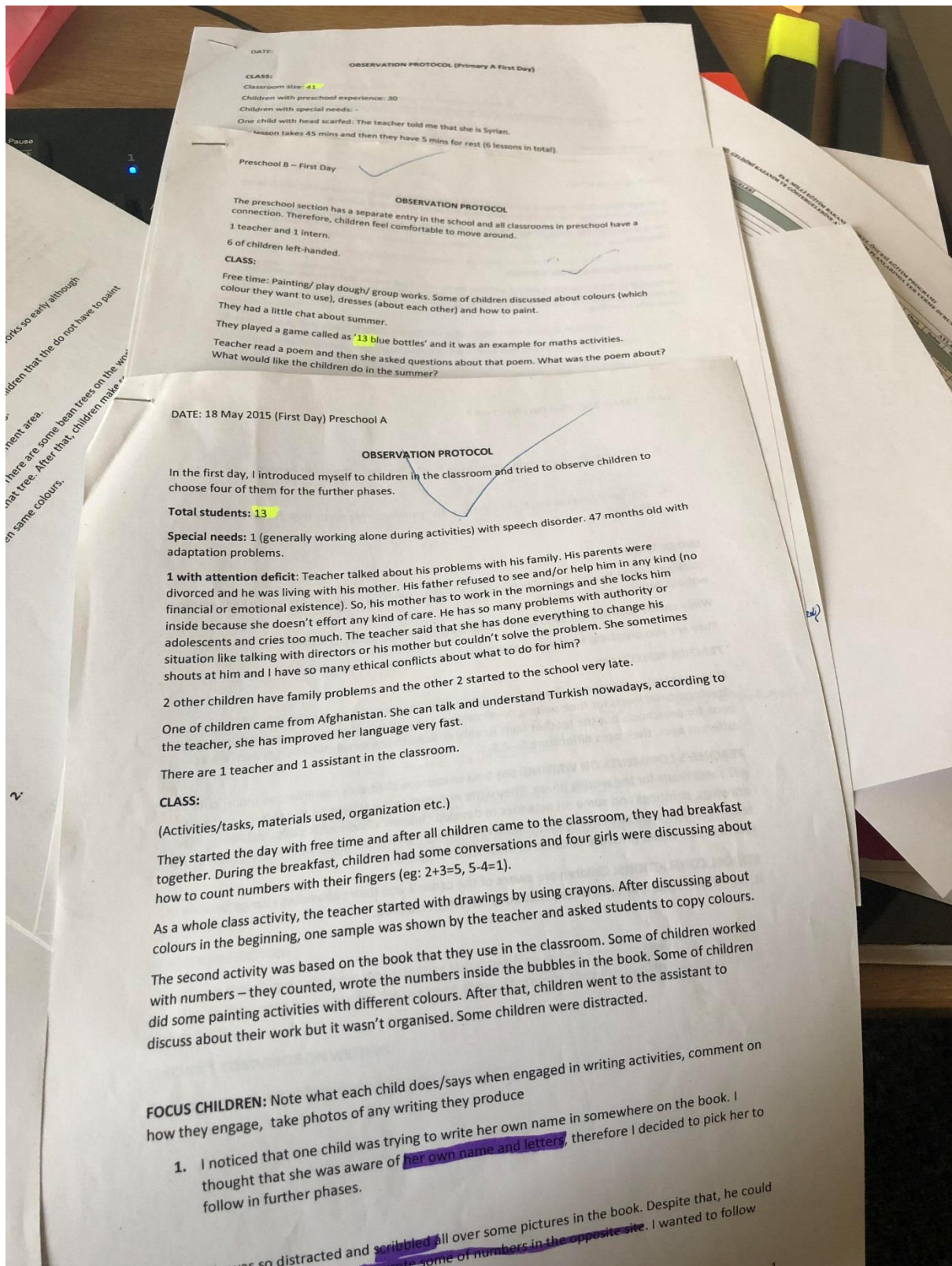
Note: where helpful photographs of group work, support materials or individual work will be taken

END OF THE DAY

TEACHER REFLECTION: Ask for teacher reflection on writing activities observed and on the engagement of the focus children using observation notes to stimulate conversation

TEACHER'S COMMENTS ON WRITING: How well does what the children have done conform to what they expected

Appendix 3. C - A photograph of analysis process of observation notes



Appendix 4. A - Visual design of classrooms

Pre-school classroom - A



Primary classroom – A



Appendix 4. B - Example of lesson plans for word construction

TÜRKÇE-1.SINIF		TEMA 1: BİREY VE TOPLUM	SÜRE: 14 EYLÜL 2015 - 13 KASIM 2015	ÖLÇME VE DEĞERLENDİRME			
AY	HAFTA	ETKİNLİKLER	ARA DİŞİPLİNERLE İLİŞKİLENDİRME ATATÜRKÇÜLÜK VE ACIKLAMALAR	DERS İÇİ VE DİŞER İLİŞKİLENDİRME			
AY	HAFTA	SÜRE	ÖĞRENME ALANLARI VE KAZANIMLAR	ÖLÇME VE DEĞERLENDİRME			
EYLÜL-EKİM	12 - 16 EKİM 2015	10	<p>Hazırlık</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dinlemek için hazırlık yapar. • Yazmak için hazırlık yapar. • Okumak için hazırlık yapar. • Sesli Hisseme ve Tanıma • Duyduğnu sesleri ayırır eder. • Duyduğnu seslerle harfleri eşleştirir. • Dikkatini dinlediğine yoğunlaştırır. • Görsellerden yararlanarak söz varlığını geliştirir. • Resim ve fotoğrafları yorumlar. • Renkleri tanıır, anlatılandırır ve yorumlar. • Sesli / Harfli Okuma ve Yazma • On bilgileri kullanarak okuduğunu anlatılandırır. • Okuduğunu anlatılandırılmada görsellerden yararlanır. • İyilebilir bir ses tonuyla okur. • Rehber yardımıyla okur. • Bitişik eğik yazı harflerini kurallama uygun yazar. • Metin Oluşturma • Sayfa düzenine ve temizliğine dikkat eder. 	<p>DİNLEME</p> <p>Şekil 2.11, "Sınıflama" (Dinlediklerinde geçen varyantlar benzer özelliklerine göre sınıflandırılabilir.) etkinliği yapılabılır.</p>	<p>1.1. Aritmetik un hayatını anlatan kitapları okumaya istek duyar.</p> <p>Ş Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışma (1.9 - 8)</p> <p>[1] "Yazma Kuralları Uygulama" başlığı altındaki kazanımları hepisi, yapılacak bütün yazma etkinliklerinde göz önüne alınmalıdır.</p> <p>1.1. Okunmuş, kalem tutma, defter tutma, el tercihi, el ve kol kaslarını geliştirme, çizgi ve boyama gelişimini, serbest ve kurallı çizimler, araç-gereç (silgi, kalem, tüp, çalıma kağıtları, cetvel, kalemler, oyun hamurları vb.) kullanımı.</p>	<p>1.7. Doğayı izler, doğadaki değişimleri fark eder ve yorumlar / 1.9 Renkleri tanıır, anlatılandırır ve yorumlar.</p> <p>2.1. Bilgi, düşünce ve izlenimlerini resim, şekil ve sembol kullanarak görselleştirir / (Yazma) 2.3. İzlenim ve deneyimlerine dayalı yazılar yazar / (Konuşma) 3.6. Deneyim ve anlatımı anlatır / (Konuşma) 2.10. Duygu, düşünce ve hayallerini sözlü olarak ifade eder / (Yazma) 2.4. Duygu, düşünce ve hayallerini anlatan yazılar yazar / (Konuşma) 2.10. Hoşlanıp hoşlanmadığı olay, durum, kişi vb. hakkında konuşur. (Yazma) 2.7. Hoşlanıp hoşlanmadıklarıyla ilgili yazılar yazar.</p>	<p>Öğrencilerinize OYO kitabında verilen "eylek" buldurunuz.</p> <p>"e" ve "ı" seslerini yan yana yazınız ve her ikisinin birlikte nasıl okunacağını sorunuz.</p> <p>Öğrencilerin cevaplarını dikkate alarak siz doğru "ei" hece/kelimesini okuyup yazınız.</p>
				<p>Kayrathılacak Sesler</p> <p>1 sesli</p>			
				<p>e ı el</p>			

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