



## CHALLENGES OF WRITING ENGLISH ACCORDING TO UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' VIEWS<sup>i</sup>

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### Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the challenges of writing in English according to the students studying at Afyon Kocatepe University. In this study, it is also identified whether there are any significant differences between the groups in terms of gender, study area, study year, having a preparatory English education at the university, type of high school, having a family member who knows English Language, having foreign friends and the experience of speaking English in a social environment. The study population is consisted of 945 bachelor students whom have been identified through maximum variation sampling. Data collected by 5 Point Likert scale, has been analyzed through t-test, Mann Whitney U-test, ANOVA and Kruskal Wallis. Nearly 50 % of the students face challenges about writing in English due to the lack of knowledge of techniques necessary for writing.

**Keywords:** writing in English, challenges, difficulties, problems, university students

### 1. Introduction

Children have to learn some rules to develop their writing skills in even native language. Writing skills are developed on purpose while speaking and listening skills are developed spontaneously in one's natural environment. Writing is a tough skill to improve since coordination of cognitive and psychomotor skills are required. Practice is necessary for writing. Writing includes three main concepts as mechanical, linguistic

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and communicative issues. Writing skills are composed of spelling, vocabulary, semantic and grammar knowledge, using appropriate punctuation and organization of content, effectively (Shastri, 2010, p. 85). It requires the correct use of conjunctions to link the ideas, sentences and paragraphs. A good piece of writing does not include unnecessary details and repetitions, rather gives the objectives and main idea of the writing (Gabrielatos, 2002). For writing impressively, one should have all the competencies about writing.

The competence of writing in native language has an important role on the competency of writing in a foreign language. People who are masters of using their native language are more successful at using foreign language than the ones who are not good at using their native language, effectively. This fact is also valid for writing skills. If the person writes in an organized and neat way in his/her native language, he/she will show the same attention while writing in a foreign language. Moreover, the attitudes towards writing in native language will affect the attitudes towards writing in a foreign language. In general, these attitudes have an effect on writing habits and writing process (Greenberg, 1988, p. 4). Students who have proficiency in writing in their native language tend to demonstrate proficiency in writing strategies, techniques and skills in a second language (Myles, 2002). According to Mohan and Lo's (1985) study, being aware of the educational experience of literacy in one's native language is a significant indicator of his/her development of writing in a foreign language.

In many cases, writing in a foreign language is much more different than writing in native language in terms of strategies, linguistic and rhetoric rules (Myles, 2002). English language is a member of Indo-European language family whereas Turkish language is a member of Ural-Altaic languages. Since these two languages belong to different language family, their linguistic structures are also different from each other. In English language, some changes occur at the roots of the words while making up new words whereas in Turkish language, the roots do not change. While English language has gender issues like he/she, Turkish language doesn't have a gender category. In English language, the word order is formed as subject+verb+object whereas in Turkish language, it is formed as subject+object+verb. In Turkish language, verb is located at the end of the sentence and the words can be used in different places in a sentence whereas in English language words cannot be put in sentences arbitrarily (Sefer & Konuk, 2014). Therefore, these differences in Turkish and English may cause some problems while writing especially for the new beginners.

It is observed that many people learning a foreign language are having difficulties in writing. The inadequacy of grammar and vocabulary knowledge becomes an obstacle for forming sentences (Mohan and Lo, 1985, p. 515; Myles, 1992). Another issue for writing effectively is to select the suitable words in accordance with the meaning of concepts. In English, there are many synonyms and antonyms, which make difficult to find the appropriate word for the context. A good writer can pick the best word from the vocabulary box of the language accumulation of the brain. This best word ensures the readers to see, feel and form vivid images about what has been written. Using specific words instead of general words makes the readers feel close to

the subject and using words addressing to five senses makes writing more powerful (Guth, 1988, pp. 325-327).

Writing is the last skill to improve after listening, reading and speaking skills. Improving writing skills needs time and effort since development of writing skill requires a process. At this long and comprehensive process, it is possible to have some difficulties in writing, which are mostly sourced from the application methods of writing classes. Students adopt habit of writing their experiences, ideas, etc. mostly during their education life. Due to the students' lack of motivation for writing, negative attitudes and prejudices towards writing, they encounter some challenges while writing in English. Teachers' inability to transfer writing strategies to the students, inability to use appropriate teaching methods and not providing preliminary preparation, which is a requirement for writing, may cause some problems on the development of students' writing skills. Moreover, inadequacy of time allocated to writing courses may discourage teachers from teaching writing strategies, evaluating students' assignments, etc. (İnal, 2006).

Besides the reasons of difficulties in writing in English, there are some variables that may affect students' problems in writing. If students have parental and social support, they may become more skilful at writing in English (Myles, 2002). Therefore, in this study, having family members who know English (parental support), having foreign friends (social support) and having experiences of speaking English in a social environment (social context) have taken into account as variables.

It had always been thought that writing has a minor role in learning a foreign language. Writing had been considered as a result of acquiring a foreign language. Nevertheless, at the time being, writing is seen as a feature which facilitates learning a foreign language and contributes to improve a foreign language (Williams, 2012). Learning a foreign language basically includes learning vocabulary, grammar rules and making up meaningful sentences through the knowledge of vocabulary and grammar. Writing in a foreign language includes all these things and more, such as punctuation, use of conjunctions, etc. Hence, writing in a foreign language accelerates acquiring the foreign language. In this study, it is aimed to investigate the challenges of writing in English, encountered by university students studying at Afyon Kocatepe University.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

What are the challenges of writing in English, faced by university students studying at Afyon Kocatepe University?

### **1.2 Sub-problems**

What is the frequency of the challenges of writing in English that university students have (in terms of sub factors)? Are there any significant differences of the challenges in terms of gender, study area, grade, having a preparatory English education at the university, type of graduated high school, having a family member who knows English, having a foreign friend, having experience of speaking English in a social environment?

## **2. Material and Methods**

### **2.1 The Model of the Study**

In this study, general survey model has been used in order to have the opinions of university students about the challenges of writing in English.

### **2.2 Study Population**

The study population consists of 945 undergraduate students studying at AfyonKocatepe University during spring semester of 2013-2014 academic year. In this study, maximum variation sampling method has been used to decide the population. Maximum variation sampling method aims to choose the population which has different characteristic features, suitable for the study subject (Singh, 2007, p. 108). In this study, students studying at different study fields (social sciences, engineer sciences and health sciences) have taken into account as study population. 145 students study at various engineering departments, 278 students study at School of Foreign Languages to learn and improve their English language skills, 142 students study at Faculty of Veterinary and 380 students study at Economics and Management departments. Maximum variation sampling method has been chosen to conduct this study because it is aimed to examine the challenges of university students whose areas of study are different from each other. In Turkey, students start to learn English at public schools when they are at 2<sup>nd</sup> grade and continue to learn English till the graduation from high school. At higher education, they can have an English preparatory year in order to learn English for one year intensely upon their requests. At Afyon Kocatepe University, the students studying at Veterinary, Economics and Management departments learn English for a whole year upon their requests before they start to take courses at their own departments. All the students participated in this research have Turkish nationality and their mother tongues are Turkish.

### **2.3 Developing a Questionnaire for Data Collection**

The data have been collected through a 5 point Likert-type scale which has been developed by the researchers. Before preparing this scale, literature research about the subject has been made and resources have been examined. Then, the questions below have been formed and asked to 10 students coincidentally chosen: On what type of topics would you like to write in English? What kind of difficulties/problems you have while you are writing in English? What are the sources of these difficulties/problems? What should you do not to have difficulties while writing in English? After assessing the answers of the students, the items of the scale have been formed. The Likert-type scale consists of 30 items including positive and negative ones. Then, experts on this area have examined these items in terms of content validity. Experts have identified ambiguity of some items and made some suggestions. According to these suggestions, 3 items have been omitted from the scale. After these amendments, the scale has been applied to 15 students to identify students' reaction towards items and there have been

a few corrections according to this feedback. For the pilot application, 380 students have answered the questionnaire.

Factor analysis has been applied to the items of the scale to assess construct validity. For the availability of factor analysis, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value and Barlett's test of Sphericity should be taken into account. The value of KMO is .843 and Barlett's test of Sphericity is .00 ( $p < .05$ ), which shows that the data is suitable for factor analysis. If the value of KMO is higher than .70, it means that there is enough number of samples for each factor (Leech, Barrett & Morgan, 2005, p. 80). After factor analysis has been applied, scree plot has been examined. According to the scree plot, 4 factors have been identified. According to rotated component matrix, item 3, item 10 and item 20 have been omitted since the differences between the factor loads of these items are less than 0.10 (Condit, Carter, Tang & Rothstein, 2015). Moreover, the factor load of item 16 and item 24 are less than 0.40 so these items have been omitted from the scale. In general, factor loads which are less than 0.30 are considered as low factor loads whereas factor loads which are 0.40 or above 0.40 are considered as high factor loads (Leech, Barrett & Morgan, 2005: 83). According to Table 1, these 4 factors explain % 55.23 of the total variance. The items whose eigen values are higher than 1 are taken into account. After the application of reliability analysis, 4 items have been omitted from the scale since their item-total correlation values are less than 0.20. Items correlating less than 0.20 with their respective scale are suggested to be omitted (McCoach, Gable & Madura, 2013). Cronbach Alpha value of this scale is  $\alpha = 0.885$ . Since one factor has only got 1 item, this item has been omitted from the scale because it is thought that it will not explain thoroughly this factor. Therefore, 3 factors have left in order to carry out the real research. These factors are named as "lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues", "structure of language and problems based on English education" and "interest".

**Table 1:** Rotated component matrix of the items

Items	Component			
	1	2	3	4
No. 4	,767			
No. 5	,763			
No. 2	,748			
No. 1	,734			
No. 7	,688			
No. 9	,645			
No. 6	,598			
No. 15	,541			
No. 18		,783		
No. 11		,729		
No. 13		,727		
No. 21		,722		
No. 12		,692		

No. 17	,652	
No. 8	,646	
No. 23		,734
No. 27		,701
No. 25		,686
No. 22		,669
No. 26		,573
No. 14		,694
No. 19		,664

According to Table 2, the scale is consisted of 18 items and factor loads of the items are between .541 and .783.

**Table 2:** The items of the scale called as “identifying the challenges of writing English”

No	I am not able to write in English because	Factor Load
1	I don't know the techniques of writing.	.734
2	I don't know how to use the conjunctions.	.748
3	I can't use the words in right places.	.767
4	I don't know English grammar rules.	.763
5	I don't know enough number of words.	.598
6	I cannot learn new words.	.688
7	I don't have enough practice.	.646
8	I don't know how to use the resources.	.645
9	The place of verb in a sentence in English is different than in Turkish.	.729
10	I have difficulties in finding the equivalent of Turkish words in English.	.692
11	English education I have is exam-oriented.	.727
12	I think writing in English is tough.	.541
13	I don't read journals written in English.	.652
14	Grammar rules of English and Turkish are completely different from each other.	.783
15	Teacher is more active than me during the courses.	.722
No	I am able to write in English because	Factor Load
16	I read English books/texts/articles.	.734
17	I can find enough time to write.	.701

According to Table 2, there are fifteen positive statements whereas two negative statements.

## 2.4 Analysis of Data

The items of the scale have been evaluated through these gaps; 4.20–5.00 as “I totally agree”, 3.40–4.19 as “I agree very much”, 2.60–3.39 as “I slightly agree”, 1.80–2.59 as “I slightly disagree” and 1.00–1.79 as “I totally disagree” (Tekin, 1991, p. 262). For the negative items, the scoring is from 5 for “I totally agree” to 1 for “I totally disagree” since the aim of the study is to identify the challenges of writing in English. For the positive items, the scoring is vice versa in the case of analysis which was made through total points. However, for the analysis of separate factors, the scoring for the positive items on one of the factor (called as “interest”) is from 5 for “I totally agree” to 1 for “I

totally disagree". For the analysis of data, mean, frequency, percentage, One Way Variance Analysis (ANOVA), Kruskal Wallis, Mann Whitney U-test and t-test have been used. Before applying parametric or nonparametric tests, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test has been applied to identify the normality and homogeneity of data. Kolmogorov-Smirnov test is used for testing the data collected coincidentally to identify its convenience for a specific distribution. According to the result of this test, if sigma (p) value is higher than 0.05, it means that the data has normal distribution (Singh, 2007, p.100).

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1 The Frequency of Challenges in Writing English According to the Views of University Students

According to Table 3, the means of many items at this factor resulted as "I slightly agree". Nearly half of the university students who participated in this research indicated that they have challenges in writing English because they don't know the techniques of writing, which is necessary for writing. 53,3 % of the students agreed the item called as "I am not able to write in English because I don't know enough number of words. Students' personal issues can be a challenge for writing in English, too. 36,4 % of the students agreed the item called as "I am not able to write in English because I think writing in English is tough. Mean of this sub-dimension is 3.09.

**Table 3:** Frequency, percentage and means of the items of the factor 1  
(lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues)

Item (I am not able to write English because)		1	2	3	4	5	$\bar{x}$	Result
1. I don't know the techniques of writing.	f	184	182	220	164	195	3.00	ISA
	%	19,5	19,3	23,3	17,4	20,6		
2. I don't know how to use the conjunctions.	f	129	160	228	213	215	3.23	ISA
	%	13,7	16,9	24,1	22,5	22,8		
3. I can't use the words in right places.	f	116	189	242	207	191	3.17	ISA
	%	12,3	20	25,6	21,9	20,2		
4. I don't know English grammar rules.	f	169	193	232	184	167	2.98	ISA
	%	17,9	20,4	24,6	19,5	17,7		
5. I don't know enough number of words.	f	107	137	198	232	271	3.44	IAVM
	%	11,3	14,5	21	24,6	28,7		
6. I cannot learn new words.	f	219	148	237	172	169	2.91	ISA
	%	23,2	15,7	25,1	18,2	17,9		
7. I don't know how to use the resources.	f	170	143	267	191	174	3.05	ISA
	%	18	15,1	28,3	20,2	18,4		
8. I think writing in English is tough.	f	190	183	228	157	187	2.96	ISA
	%	20,1	19,4	24,1	16,6	19,8		

(IAVM: I Agree Very Much, ISA: I Slightly Agree)

According to Table 4, the means of many items at this factor resulted as "I agree very much". More than half of the university students indicated that they had difficulties in writing English because of the differences between English and Turkish. 58,6 % of the

students agreed the item which is “I am not able to write English because the place of verb in a sentence in English is different than in Turkish. 55,7 % of the students agreed the item which is “I am not able to write English because grammar rules of English and Turkish are completely different from each other. Mean of this sub-dimension is 3.48.

**Table 4:** Frequency, percentage and means of the items of the factor 2  
(structure of language and problems based on English education)

Item (I am not able to write English because)		1	2	3	4	5	$\bar{x}$	Result
1. I don't have enough practice.	f	118	109	196	193	329	3.53	IAVM
	%	12,5	11,5	20,7	20,4	34,8		
2. The place of verb in a sentence in English is different than in Turkish.	f	145	81	165	163	391	3.60	IAVM
	%	15,3	8,6	17,5	17,2	41,4		
3. I have difficulties in finding the equivalent of Turkish words in English.	f	98	140	248	243	216	3.35	ISA
	%	10,4	14,8	26,2	25,7	22,9		
4. English education I have is exam-oriented.	f	147	119	172	143	364	3.48	IAVM
	%	15,6	12,6	18,2	15,1	38,5		
5. I don't read journals written in English.	f	162	105	179	154	345	3.43	IAVM
	%	17,1	11,1	18,9	16,3	36,5		
6. Grammar rules of English and Turkish are completely different from each other.	f	102	109	208	201	325	3.56	IAVM
	%	10,8	11,5	22	21,3	34,4		
7. Teacher is more active than me during the courses.	f	145	110	198	164	328	3.44	IAVM
	%	15,3	11,6	21	17,4	34,7		

(IAVM: I Agree Very Much, ISA: I Slightly Agree)

According to Table 5, more than half of the university students stated that they had difficulties in writing due to their indifference in writing English because the means of the items at this factor resulted as “I slightly disagree”. 57.3 % of the university students disagreed with the statement which is “I am able to write English because I read English books/texts/articles. Mean of this sub-dimension is 2.54.

**Table 5:** Frequency, percentage and means of the items of the factor 3 (interest)

Item (I am able to write English because)		5	4	3	2	1	$\bar{x}$	Result
1. I read English books/texts/articles.	f	337	204	187	118	99	2.40	ISD
	%	35,7	21,6	19,8	12,5	10,5		
2. I can find enough time to write.	f	241	187	253	146	118	2.69	ISD
	%	25,5	19,8	26,8	15,4	12,5		

(ISD: I Slightly Disagree)

For the analysis of the data to find out the suitable tests of hypothesis, the features of data have been examined. To find out the normality of data, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test had been applied. According to Table 6, since p value of the 1<sup>st</sup> sub-dimension is .176 ( $p > 0.05$ ), for the analysis of means, t test has been applied while for the analysis of mean rank, ANOVA has been applied. For the other sub-dimensions, p value is 0.00 so the data doesn't have normal distribution ( $p < 0.05$ ). Therefore, for the analysis of the data in 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-dimension, Mann Whitney U-test has been applied to compare the means whereas Kruskal Wallis test has been applied to compare the mean ranks.



**Table 6:** Kolmogorov-Smirnov test result for the factors (sub-dimensions)

		Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3
N		945	945	945
Normal Parameters	Mean	24,7989	24,4392	5,1016
	Standard Deviation	7,55557	6,64352	2,28301
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		1,103	2,872	3,728
p value		,176	,000	,000

### 3.2 Gender Issues

The t-test analysis result for the 1st sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between the two groups in terms of gender is given in Table 7. According to Table 7, there is significant difference between the groups in terms of gender in relation to the challenges caused by lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues ( $p < 0.05$ ). According to Table 7, male students have more difficulties than the female students in writing English due to the lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues.

**Table 7:** t-test analysis of “gender” variable for factor 1  
(lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues)

Factor 1	Gender	N	$\bar{x}$	S. D.	T	p
Lack of Technical Knowledge and Problems Based on Personal Issues	Female	445	24.23	7.48	-	.031*
	Male	500	25.29	7.58	2.156	

\*  $p < 0.05$

Mann Whitney U-test results for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between mean ranks in terms of gender are given in Table 8. According to Table 8, there is no significant difference between the mean ranks in terms of gender ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Table 8:** Mann Whitney u-test results of “gender” variable for factor 2 and 3  
(“structure of language and problems based on English education” and “interest”)

Sub-dimensions	Gender	N	Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Structure of Language and Problems Based on English Education (Factor 2)	Female	445	483,74	215264	106471	.253
	Male	500	463,44	231721		
Interest (Factor 3)	Female	445	476,99	212259	109476	.669
	Male	500	469,45	234726		

### 3.3 Study Area

ANOVA result for the 1<sup>st</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between the groups in terms of study area is given in Table 9. According to Table 9, there are significant differences among the groups in terms of study area in relation to challenges caused by lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues ( $p < 0.05$ ). According to Levene test of this sub-dimension, variances are not homogenous since p value is 0.27 ( $p < 0.05$ ). To find out the sources of differences Tamhane’s T2 test has been applied since the variances and the samples are not equal

(Kayri, 2009). According to Tamhane's T2 test, students studying English Language have fewer challenges in writing English caused by lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues than the ones who are studying at engineering, veterinary and business departments.

**Table 9:** ANOVA result of "study area" variable for factor 1  
(lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues)

Factor 1	Study Area	N	Standard Deviation	$\bar{x}$	F	p	Source of Difference
Lack of Technical Knowledge and Problems Based on Personal Issues	1. Engineering	145	7,08	25,22	12,664	.000*	1 > 2
	2. Foreign Language (English)	278	6,70	22,59			2 < 3
	3. Veterinary	142	7,70	26,69			3 > 2
	4. Business Studies	380	7,91	25,54			4 > 2

\* p < 0.05

Kruskal Wallis test results for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference among mean ranks in terms of study area are given in Table 10. According to Table 10, there are no significant differences among mean ranks in terms of study area in relation to the challenges caused by structure of language and problems based on English Education ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, there are significant differences among mean ranks in terms of study area in relation to Factor 3 ( $p > 0.05$ ). To find out the source of differences, Mann Whitney U-test has been applied. According to Mann Whitney U-test results, the students studying at veterinary department have more difficulties in writing English than the ones studying English Language and engineering.

**Table 10:** Kruskal Wallis test results of "study area" variable for factor 2 and 3  
(“structure of language and problems based on English education” and “interest”)

Sub-dimensions	Study Area	N	Mean Ranks	X <sup>2</sup>	Sd	p	Source of Difference
Structure of Language and Problems Based on English Education (Factor 2)	1. Engineering	145	477.27	.187	3	.980	
	2. Foreign Language (English)	278	470.94				
	3. Veterinary	142	465.73				
	4. Business Studies	380	475.59				
Interest (Factor 3)	1. Engineering	145	491,61	10,530	3	.015*	1 < 3
	2. Foreign Language (English)	278	502,05				2 < 3
	3. Veterinary	142	415,68				
	4. Business Studies	380	466,07				

\* p < 0.05

### 3.4 Grade

ANOVA result for the 1<sup>st</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between the groups in terms of grade is given in Table 11. According to Table 11, there are significant differences among the groups in terms of grade in relation to the challenges caused by lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues ( $p < 0.05$ ). According to Levene test of this sub-dimension, variances are not homogenous since  $p$  value is 0.19 ( $p < 0.05$ ). To find out the sources of differences Tamhane's T2 test has been applied since the variances and the samples are not equal (Kayri, 2009). According to Tamhane's T2 test, students studying at 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who are studying at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades. The students studying at 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades have more difficulties in writing English than the ones who are studying at 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> grades due to the lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues.

**Table 11:** ANOVA result of "grade" variable for factor 1  
(lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues)

Factor 1	Grade	N	Standard Deviation	$\bar{x}$	f	p	Source of Difference
Lack of Technical Knowledge and Problems Based on Personal Issues	1 <sup>st</sup>	427	7,02	23,70	9,849	.000*	1 < 2, 1 < 4
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	118	6,91	26,90			2 > 1, 2 > 3
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	202	8,18	24,24			3 < 2, 3 < 4
	4 <sup>th</sup>	198	7,86	26,45			4 > 1, 4 > 3

\*  $p < 0.05$

Kruskal Wallis test results for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-dimension to examine whether there is any significant difference among mean ranks in terms of grade are given in Table 12. According to Table 12, there are no significant differences among mean ranks in terms of grade in relation to the difficulties caused by structure of language and problems based on English Education ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, there are significant differences among mean ranks in terms of grade in relation to Factor 3 ( $p < 0.05$ ). To find out the source of differences, Mann Whitney U-test has been applied. According to Mann Whitney U-test results, the students studying at 4<sup>th</sup> grade have more difficulties in writing English than the ones who are studying at 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> grades in terms of interest.

**Table 12:** Kruskal Wallis test results of "grade" variable for factor 2 and 3

Sub-dimensions	Grade	N	Mean Ranks	X <sup>2</sup>	Sd	p	Source of Difference
Structure of Language and Problems Based on English Education (Factor 2)	1 <sup>st</sup>	427	472,18	.649	3	.885	
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	118	456,47				
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	202	476,30				
	4 <sup>th</sup>	198	481,25				
Interest (Factor 3)	1 <sup>st</sup>	427	488,46	10,273	3	.016*	1 < 4
	2 <sup>nd</sup>	118	506,08				2 < 4
	3 <sup>rd</sup>	202	471,19				
	4 <sup>th</sup>	198	421,80				

\*  $p < 0.05$

### 3.5 Preparatory English education at the university

The t-test analysis result for the 1<sup>st</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between the two groups in terms of having preparatory English education at the university is given in Table 13. According to Table 13, there is significant difference between the groups in terms of having preparatory English education at the university in relation to the challenges caused by lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues ( $p < 0.05$ ). University students who had preparatory English education at the university have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who didn't have preparatory English education at the university due to the lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues.

**Table 13:** t-test analysis of “preparatory English education” variable for factor 1  
(lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues)

Factor 1	Preparatory English Education	N	$\bar{x}$	S. D.	T	p
Lack of Technical Knowledge and Problems Based on Personal Issues	Yes	577	23.85	7.37	-	.000*
	No	368	26.28	7.60	4.888	

\*  $p < 0.05$

Mann Whitney U-test results for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between mean ranks in terms of having preparatory English education at the university are given in Table 14. According to Table 14, there is no significant difference between the mean ranks in terms of having preparatory English education at the university in relation to the challenges caused by structure of language and problems based on English Education ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, there is significant difference between the mean ranks in terms of having preparatory English education at the university in relation to factor 3 (interest) ( $p < 0.05$ ). The university students who had preparatory English education at the university have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who didn't have preparatory English education at the university.

**Table 14:** Mann Whitney u-test results of “preparatory English education” variable for factor 2 and 3 (“structure of language and problems based on English education” and “interest”)

Sub-dimensions	Preparatory English Education	N	Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Structure of Language and Problems Based on English Education (Factor 2)	Yes	577	464,97	268288	101535	.257
	No	368	485,59	178696		
Interest (Factor 3)	Yes	577	494,70	285444	93644	.002*
	No	368	438,97	161540		

\*  $p < 0.05$

### 3.6 Type of graduated high school

ANOVA result for the 1<sup>st</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between the groups in terms of type of graduated high school is given in Table 15. According to Table 15, there are significant differences among the groups in

terms of type of graduated high school in relation to the difficulties caused by lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues ( $p < 0.05$ ). According to Levene test of this sub-dimension, variances are homogenous since p value is 0.683 ( $p > 0.05$ ). To find out the sources of differences Scheffe Test has been applied since the variances and the samples are not equal (Kayri, 2009). According to Scheffe Test, the students graduated from General High Schools have more challenges in writing English than the ones graduated from Anatolian High School and other type of high schools due to the lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues.

**Table 15:** ANOVA result of “type of graduated high school” variable for factor 1  
(lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues)

Factor 1	Type	N	Standard Deviation	$\bar{x}$	f	p	Source of Difference
Lack of Technical Knowledge and Problems Based on Personal Issues	1. Anatolian High School	286	7,73779	24,1783	5,567	.004*	1 < 2
	2. General High School	482	7,47488	25,5809			2 > 1, 2 > 3
	3. Other High Schools**	177	7,27738	23,6723			3 < 2

\*  $p < 0.05$

\*\*Other High Schools consist of College, Super High School, Anatolian Technical High School, Vocational High School, Anatolian Teacher High School, Technical High School, Open High School, Science High School, Multi-Program High School.

Kruskal Wallis test results for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-dimension to determine whether there is any significant difference among mean ranks in terms of type of graduated high school are given in Table 16. According to Table 16, there are no significant differences among mean ranks in terms of type of graduated high school ( $p > 0.05$ ). However, there are significant differences among mean ranks in terms of type of graduated high school in relation to Factor 2 ( $p < 0.05$ ). To find out the source of differences, Mann Whitney U-test has been applied. According to Mann Whitney U-test results, students graduated from General High Schools have more challenges in writing English than the ones graduated from Anatolian High School and other high schools due to the structure of language and problems based on English Education.

**Table 16:** Kruskal Wallis test results of “type of graduated high school” variable for factor 2 and 3 (“structure of language and problems based on English education” and “interest”)

Sub-dimensions	Type	N	Mean Ranks	X <sup>2</sup>	Sd	p	Source of Difference
Structure of Language and Problems Based on English Education (Factor 2)	1. Anatolian High School	286	446,35	14,346	2	.001*	1 < 2
	2. General High School	482	505,35				2 > 3
	3. Other High Schools**	177	427,98				
Interest (Factor 3)	1. Anatolian High School	286	494,27	4,699	2	.095	

	2. General High School	482	454,39
	3. Other High Schools**	177	489,32

\*  $p < 0.05$

\*\*Other High Schools consist of College, Super High School, Anatolian Technical High School, Vocational High School, Anatolian Teacher High School, Technical High School, Open High School, Science High School, Multi-Program High School.

### 3.7 Use of English in the Family

T-test analysis result for the 1<sup>st</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between the two groups in terms of having a family member who knows English is given in Table 17. According to Table 17, there is significant difference between the groups in terms of having a family member who knows English in relation to the challenges caused by lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues ( $p < 0.05$ ). The university students having family member who knows English have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who don't have any family member who knows English.

**Table 17:** t-test analysis of “whether family members know English” variable for factor 1 (lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues)

Factor 1	Does anybody in your family know English?	N	$\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation	T	p
Lack of Technical Knowledge and Problems Based on Personal Issues	Yes	357	23.910	7.87	-	.005*
	No	588	25.338	7.31	2.827	

\*  $p < 0.05$

Mann Whitney U-test results for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between mean ranks in terms of having a family member who knows English are given in Table 18. According to Table 18, there are significant differences between the mean ranks in terms of having a family member who knows English in relation to factor 2 and factor 3 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The university students having a family member who knows English have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who don't have any family member who knows English according to factor 2 and factor 3.

**Table 18:** Mann Whitney u-test results of “whether family members know English” variable for factor 2 and 3 (“structure of language and problems based on English education” and “interest”)

Sub-dimensions	Does anybody in your family know English?	N	Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Structure of Language and Problems Based on English Education (Factor 2)	Yes	357	450,59	160859	96956	.049*
	No	588	486,61	286125		
Interest (Factor 3)	Yes	357	498,96	178128	95690	.021*
	No	588	457,24	268856		

\*  $p < 0.05$

### 3.8 Foreign Friends

T-test analysis result for the 1<sup>st</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between the two groups in terms of having a foreign friend is given in Table 19. According to Table 19, there is significant difference between the groups in terms of having a foreign friend in relation to the challenges caused by lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues ( $p < 0.05$ ). The university students who have a foreign friend have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who don't have any foreign friend due to the lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues.

**Table 19:** t-test analysis of "having a foreign friend" variable for factor 1  
(lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues)

Factor 1	Do you have a foreign friend?	N	$\bar{x}$	Standard Deviation	T	p
Lack of Technical Knowledge and Problems Based on Personal Issues	Yes	388	23.2088	7.94	-	.000*
	No	557	25.9066	7.06	5.482	

\*  $p < 0.05$

Mann Whitney U-test results for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between mean ranks in terms of having a foreign friend are given in Table 20. According to Table 20, there are significant differences between the mean ranks in terms of having a foreign friend in relation to Factor 2 and Factor 3 ( $p < 0.05$ ). The university students who have a foreign friend have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who don't have any foreign friend according to Factor 2 and Factor 3.

**Table 20:** Mann Whitney u-test results of "having a foreign friend" variable for factor 2 and 3  
(“structure of language and problems based on English education” and “interest”)

Sub-dimensions	Do you have a foreign friend?	N	Mean Ranks	Sum of Ranks	U	p
Structure of Language and Problems Based on English Education (Factor 2)	Yes	388	420,59	163189	87723	.000*
	No	557	509,51	283795		
Interest (Factor 3)	Yes	388	551,06	213809	77772	.000*
	No	557	418,63	233175		

\*  $p < 0.05$

### 3.9 Experience of Speaking English in a Social Environment

ANOVA result for the 1<sup>st</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference between the groups in terms of experience of speaking English in a social environment is given in Table 21. According to Table 21, there are significant differences among the groups in terms of experience of speaking English in a social environment in relation to the challenges caused by lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues ( $p < 0.05$ ). According to Levene test of this sub-dimension, variances are not homogenous since p value is 0.000 ( $p < 0.05$ ). To find out the sources of differences Tamhane's T2 Test has been applied since the variances and the samples are not equal (Kayri, 2009). According to Tamhane's T2 Test, the students

who always prefer to speak English in a social environment have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who sometimes and never prefer to speak English in a social environment. According to Table 21, the students who sometimes prefer to speak English in a social environment have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who never prefer to speak English in a social environment.

**Table 21:** ANOVA result of “experience of speaking English in a social environment” variable for factor 1 (lack of technical knowledge and problems based on personal issues)

Factor 1	Experience of Speaking English in a Social Environment	N	Standard Deviation	$\bar{x}$	f	p	Source of Difference
Lack of Technical Knowledge and Problems Based on Personal Issues	1. Always	322	8,28	22,74	26,889	.000*	1 < 2, 1 < 3
	2. Sometimes	388	6,61	24,95			2 > 1, 2 < 3
	3. Never	235	7,16	27,36			3 > 1, 3 > 2

\* p < 0.05

Kruskal Wallis test results for the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> sub-dimension to find out whether there is any significant difference among mean ranks in terms of experience of speaking English in a social environment are given in Table 22. According to Table 22, there are significant differences among mean ranks in terms of experience of speaking English in a social environment in relation to Factor 2 and Factor 3 (p < 0.05). To find out the source of differences, Mann Whitney U-test has been applied. According to Mann Whitney U-test results, the students who always prefer to speak English in a social environment have fewer challenges in writing in English than the ones who sometimes and never prefer to speak English in a social environment in relation to Factor 2. Due to the disinterest in writing in English, the students who always prefer to speak English in a social environment have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who sometimes and never prefer to speak English in a social environment. The students who sometimes prefer to speak English in a social environment have fewer challenges in writing English than the ones who never prefer to speak English in a social environment.

**Table 22:** Kruskal Wallis test results of “experience of speaking English in a social environment” variable for factor 2 and 3 (“structure of language and problems based on English education” and “interest”)

Sub-dimensions	Experience of Speaking English in a Social Environment	N	Mean Ranks	X <sup>2</sup>	Sd	P	Source of Difference
Structure of Language and Problems Based on English Education (Factor 2)	1. Always	322	405,35	30,269	2	.000*	1 < 2
	2. Sometimes	388	504,23				1 < 3
	3. Never	235	514,13				
Interest (Factor 3)	1. Always	322	558,81	58,564	2	.000*	1 < 2
	2. Sometimes	388	454,45				1 < 3
	3. Never	235	386,06				2 < 3

\* p < 0.05



#### 4. Discussion and Results

The techniques for writing are necessary elements to write in native and foreign language. These techniques include some tips essential for writing of introduction, body and conclusion parts, convenience of conjunctions, use of punctuations, etc. According to this study, nearly half of the students have indicated that they have challenges in writing English since they don't know the techniques for writing. Moreover, half of the students have stated that they don't know enough number of words necessary for writing, which overlaps with the findings of the study by Klimova (2014). Therefore, it can be concluded that English education at schools do not allow teachers to allocate time for writing activities. At schools, only some basic skills like grammar and reading are the ones which are focused by teachers. Writing activities remain in the background since the application and assessment of these activities take much more time and energy. To test and evaluate writing activities is undeniably difficult (Bacha, 2002). Therefore, students are not interested in writing, which compromises with this research's result. The development of writing skills is based on process and therefore, teachers and students should be patient to improve this skill. English teachers generally ignore writing activities to keep pace with the intense curriculum and prepare their students for the exams. According to Paker's (2006) study, it has been found out that English teachers spend about 50% of the English hours for grammar, about 10% of them for listening activities, nearly 17% of them for reading activities, nearly 12% of them for writing activities and nearly 11% of them for speaking activities. According to Kim's study (2005), 54% of the students indicated that writing in English is more difficult than reading, speaking, listening and grammar. They mostly have difficulties in organizing their writing instead of content, language or academic type. In Shokrpour and Fallahzadeh (2007) study, it is found out that students need more lesson hours to write in English. According to their study, students studying Medicine have difficulties in writing English due to the lack of knowledge about techniques for writing.

According to one of the results of this study, female students have fewer challenges in writing English caused by lack of technical knowledge for writing than male students. This means that female students know much more techniques necessary for writing and they are able to apply them while writing English. It shows that female students are more successful and careful than males in their academic life. The researchers of Missouri University and Glasgow University have stated that female students are much successful than the males in their school life at 70% of the countries where they carried out that research (Stoet & Geary, 2015).

According to another result of this study, students have exam-oriented education at schools, which causes them to have problems while writing English. In Shun-ying (2010) study, the problems of writing English are sourced from exam-oriented education, inadequate teaching methods and ineffective feedback. According to another result of this study, grammar differences between native and foreign languages cause some problems while writing in a foreign language. The difference sequence of words in sentences may cause a few problems at the beginning of learning how to write but

after some practice, students get used to be aware of the differences and apply the rules accordingly. The problems related with the grammar differences can be eliminated as long as the students practice reading and writing. Contrary to this study's result, there may be positive transfers from native language to foreign language while learning foreign language. Individuals are able to transfer their writing skills and strategies from native language to the other language (Friedlander, 1990, p. 109).

At School of Foreign Languages, the main focus for the whole year is learning English at a certain level. The techniques for writing are also taught so the students studying at this school don't have many problems about writing than the other students who are studying at engineering, veterinary and business departments. At other departments, students and teachers focus on their study fields and do not use English frequently, which causes them to forget the techniques of writing. At their first grades, students take "Foreign Language (English) I" and "Foreign Language (English) II" courses. These courses enhance students' interest in English and aim at improving students' English skills. Students at 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grades focus on their specific study fields and forget the techniques for writing in time.

According to this study, preparatory English education at the university has a positive impact on students' writing skills due to the experience and knowledge they have during one intense year full of English. Therefore, preparatory English education shouldn't be seen as a period of time which is unnecessary. Indeed, it is a very beneficial year for the students who want to improve their English skills. However, according to the study by Arkin and Osam (2014), it has been indicated that preparatory English education at the university does not have so much positive influence on students' academic success. After preparatory English education at the university, the students have still problems in foreign language and have difficulties in understanding the content of the courses and follow them.

The type of graduated high school affects students' problems in writing in English. At Anatolian High Schools, English education is more about practice when it is compared to General High Schools. It can be concluded that English teachers, the methods they use, the school environment, the materials for learning language differ from each other at Anatolian High Schools and General High Schools. The hours of English lessons at Anatolian High Schools are more than the ones at General High Schools so English is taught more intensely at Anatolian High Schools. This result compromises with the result of Aydın's (2006) study.

Students' social environment, their friends and family influence their attitudes towards English and thus may affect their abilities in English. If they have a family member who knows English, they are more motivated and interested to use English and they have the opportunity to speak English. If they have foreign friends, they feel more comfortable while using foreign language. The students who have foreign friends are able to practice English and thus are able to improve their foreign language skills in a natural way.

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