



IMPROVING THE SKILLS OF WRITING A THOUGHT PARAGRAPH IN 7TH GRADE STUDENTS: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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Abstract:

This action research study was conducted to improve the skills of writing a thought paragraph in 7th grade students. The study was planned for a 14-week period and a total of 25 activities were implemented with students during the study. Interviews held with Turkish teachers, journals kept by the researcher and the students in relation to the study contributed to the course of the research. At the end of the study, it was observed that the students had a preconception against writing before starting the action research study. According to the findings of the study, it is understood that the students did not receive a paragraph-only education, and that the paragraph types are briefly addressed in Turkish courses. This may have led students to have prejudice about writing and paragraph type. Students have undergone a process-based activity implementation that moves from word to sentence, and from sentence to paragraph. The activities applied to students during the action research study were created to achieve inductive and deductive learning, completing a piece, gaining the skills of comprehensive and critical thinking about an event or a subject. It was seen in the students' journal entries and written essays that the skills of thought paragraph writing gradually improved. This action research study revealed that if students are provided with comprehensive thought paragraph writing training, they would be able to write thought paragraphs at the desired level. It is thought that if students are given more comprehensive training on paragraph types, students' problems with their ability to write would be reduced.

Keywords: writing thought paragraphs, paragraph writing, action research

1. Introduction

Humans think with their language and written expression is one of the ways that humans convey their thoughts (Aksan, 2009, s.13). Written expression is a way of communication that carries students' desires, needs, emotions and thoughts from their minds to the

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external world. The educational process of written expression is facilitated by Turkish teachers through Turkish Lessons Curriculum which aims for students to be able to express their feelings and thoughts, and their views on a subject clearly and effectively both in speaking and writing (MEB, 2019, p.8). Several studies showed that students experience problems in expressing their thoughts in writing. Lack of writing skills in students shows that the method appropriate for the desired purpose and quality was not selected, and the phases required in a text creation process were not completed (Göğüş, 1978, p.3).

Various researchers identified that the writing skills education is not implemented comprehensively and is briefly addressed through some surface level activities. Çağmlar & Oflazoglu (2002), in their study examining the written expression skills in Turkish lessons, stated that written expression activities are not performed regularly in Turkish lessons as there is no functional application method. In order to avoid these, it would be beneficial to start with an approach of forming sentences through using vocabulary, then move towards paragraph, and to a text. Words form sentences by going through various cognitive processes in our minds. Meaningful and coherent sentences form paragraphs. Sentences created by the influence of vocabulary through various cognitive processes are likely to be thought products.

It can be thought that every sentence created in this way can represent a thought value. These thought values form the paragraph in a common context. Therefore, it would not be wrong to call each paragraph unit a unit of thought. Paragraph means unity of thought and expression (Çatıkkaş, 2001, p.39; Akbayır, 2006, p.167). Paragraph is a unit of thought (Özdemir, 2002, p.74). A paragraph as one of the basic elements of written expression is demonstration of transitioning from one idea to its explanation by making partitions in articles (Aktaş and Gündüz, 2001, p.83). Aktaş and Gündüz (2001, p.85) described paragraphs of thought as the paragraphs in which various thoughts are expressed in any subject.

A text consists of paragraphs. The paragraph is one of the basic units of the texts that consist of sentences formed in the context of the same subject. Paragraphs are mostly processed within a certain content integrity and are formed as sections in which supporting ideas about the subject are expressed (Güneş, 1999, p.46). Statements that may impair the integrity of the paragraph should not be included in a paragraph. The vocabulary group that forms the paragraph should not consist of words that may contradict each other. Since the sentences that make up the paragraph are created around a coordinated thought trail, there is a chain link between these sentences. Just as there are paragraphs with an introductory, development and conclusion sentence, some paragraphs can be purely an introductory, development or conclusion paragraph (Bilgin, 2006, pp.599-610). Since paragraphs are composed of sentences, students should first be taught that the sentence is a group of words that express a thought, a judgement, or a proposition (Ergin, 1994, p. 405). Thus, students will be able to express their thoughts in sentences, and ultimately these sentences will become part of the paragraphs of the desired quality. The desired texts will be produced through careful creation of the

paragraphs, which are one of the most basic elements of the text. For this reason, it is thought that it will be beneficial to give detailed education about how to construct the thought paragraphs, which is the basic building block of the text, before the students are asked to create thought paragraphs. Although writing skills is among the basic skills of Turkish lessons, it is not emphasized much, and it is processed superficially. It is seen that independent studies on this skill are not sufficiently used to develop writing skills in line with the learning outcomes envisaged by the program. However, writing skills can reach the desired level as a result of educational practices that involve a serious, comprehensive and long process. The aim of activities in composition lessons is to enable the students to give an order to their own world of emotions and thoughts (Kaplan, 1972, p.9). In the study conducted by Eyüp and Uzuner in 2012, it was stated that the written expression skills of students were not at the desired level and their writing skills training was insufficient in Turkish lessons.

Various studies have revealed that students have problems in their written expression skills and experience difficulties in forming texts based on thought. Most of the studies in the literature have not gone beyond case studies. Various studies on writing skills reveal that students' written expression skills are not at the desired level (Sever, 2011; Akbayır, 2010; Aktaş, 2001; Ağca, 2003; Özdemir, 2002; Branson, 1988; Anderson, 1981). When students are asked to write their thoughts on any subject, it is seen that a large part of the students form sentences that are insufficient in terms of text quality and have no content integrity. In the literature, the number of applied studies focusing on the components of these skills that students struggle with is very low. This study is very important as it focuses on the components of writing skill and aims to develop each component in itself. In this study, students were taught that a word is a comprehension unit through examples, and within this scope, the roles vocabulary play in forming sentences were explained through applied activities. Thus, attention was drawn to the importance of words in creating sentences. In addition, in this action research, the fact that a sentence is a conclusion unit, the paragraph is a unit of thought and that there is a link between a paragraph and the whole text were addressed with examples (Koç, 1998, p.9). This study is significant as it addresses sentences as structures that make up a paragraph, and words as elements of sentences in an action research. When studies in Turkey on writing skills are reviewed, it is seen that there are many studies focusing on writing skills at a sentence level while there are few studies on writing skills at the paragraph level. Thus, students think that paragraphs and sentences are formed by combining them randomly (Can, 2012, p.5).

If students are expected to create beautiful and expressive thought pieces in Turkish lessons, they should first be taught how to create thought paragraphs. In this context, writing education should follow the logic of moving from choosing words to making sentences, from making sentences to paragraphs, and creating a text from paragraphs. Thought pieces generally start directly with the text size. However, first working on the level of paragraphs that make up the text and organizing the thoughts in that context would prevent the creation of inconsistent texts (Tok, 2014, p. 892). Departing

from the assumption that teaching writing should start at the paragraph level instead of a textual level in writing thought pieces would be beneficial, this study was designed as an action research to implement teaching to write thought-based texts for 7th grade students. In alignment with the nature of action research, practitioners aim to solve problems they identified. This study was planned as a 14- week implementation and carried out by the researcher in his own classroom with the purpose of solving the problems, identified by the researcher, that students encounter in writing thought paragraphs, and to improve their writing skills.

In alignment with this purpose, the following sub-questions guided the research study:

- 1) What are the skill levels of 7th grade students in writing thought paragraphs?
- 2) What are the effects of activities performed to improve the skills of writing thought paragraphs on 7th grade students' skills?

2. Material and Methods

This study employs an action research model which is one of the qualitative research methodologies with a descriptive nature. Action research is conducted by researchers, practitioners, and stakeholders affected by the problem. In a study, the current practice is critically assessed and the measures to take for improving the situation are determined (Karasar, 2003, p.52). Although action research is a type of qualitative research, it uses data collection methods and techniques from both qualitative and quantitative research methodologies (Kuzu, 2009, p.1). This study was conducted in a classroom setting where the researcher is the teacher.

2.1 Action Research Process and Plan

The processes of action research are addressed around four main aspects that are: identification of the research problem or the focus, data collection, data analysis and interpretation, and action planning. The approach used in this study aims to identify problems during application or to understand an identified problem and to solve it with the systematic data collected (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011, p. 295). This action research study can be evaluated according to Johnson's (2005, p.51) description of identifying a problem and conducting research related to the identified problem. The study started with a 2-week observation period. The study continued for 14 weeks starting on 25.09.2019 and ending on 15.12.2019. During the study, regular meetings were held with the validity committee. A 14-week action plan was prepared for the study. The action research plan created consisted of 10 steps to follow.

2.1.1 Action Research Plan

- 1) identification and planning of thought paragraph activities to be implemented,
- 2) review of identified activities by field experts (validity committee) and make necessary arrangements and changes,

- 3) finalizing the activities to be implemented,
- 4) meeting with the school administration and teachers where the study will be implemented,
- 5) week-to-week planning of activities to be implemented,
- 6) meeting with field experts (validity committee),
- 7) focus group interview,
- 8) starting the implementation, having additional meetings related to the status of the activities implemented with the field experts (validity committee) in parallel with developments during implementation,
- 9) final checks before data analysis by evaluating the activities implemented by field experts (validity committee),
- 10) data analysis,
- 11) findings and discussion.

2.2 Study Group (Participants)

Participants of the study consist of 30 7th grade students enrolled during the 2018-2019 academic year in Antalya Kepez District Nebi Güney Imam Hatip Middle School. The decision on selecting these participants was based on the fact that the researcher being the teacher of these students would make the management of this group throughout the study easier. In Turkish lessons, the thought paragraph writing activities were carried out in accordance with an action plan lasting 14 weeks.

2.3 Measurement (Data Collection) Tools Used in The Study

In this study, interviews with Turkish teachers, document reviews, semi-structured interviews, journals of the researcher and students, and examples of activities and applications that students will store in their student files during the course of the study were used in the process of data collection. Activities to be performed with students in this action research were prepared in line with the opinions of field experts. In addition, by taking the opinions of the field experts, a scale of thought paragraph assessment was created by the researcher in line with the characteristics of the thought paragraphs. The review of the data collection process and the data by the field experts is important for the rigor of the study in terms of validity and reliability. The exchange of opinions between the validity committee and the researcher in the process helps to shape the research more clearly (Hubbard and Power, 1993; as cited by Cavkaytar, 2009, p. 112). In this study, the validity committee consisted of Turkish teachers working in the school where the study was conducted. During the action research, 25 activities were implemented for 14 weeks in order to improve the thought paragraph writing skills of the students.

The data obtained from these activities were sorted and evaluated. A total of 10 characteristics were determined in the thought paragraph evaluation scale. Each characteristic has a 1-point value. As a result of the evaluations, the point value of the thought paragraphs written by the students was determined. The scores students

received for the paragraphs they wrote in the first week and the last week of the study were compared.

Table 1: Thought Paragraph Evaluation Scale

Thought Paragraph Characteristic	Score value
1. The thought paragraphs provide information about a topic.	
2. The thought is clearly stated.	
3. Author's thoughts on the subject are explained.	
4. Off-topic thoughts are not included.	
5. Prompts the reader to think.	
6. Supportive statements revealing why the thought expressed is believed are included.	
7. The paragraph consists of three sections that are: the subject sentence, supportive sentences, and conclusion sentences.	
8. Ways to develop thoughts are used.	
9. The thought discussed in the paragraph is expressed consistently.	
10. Paragraph is not finished until the thought expressed in the paragraph is complete.	

2.4 Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, descriptive research methods were used. The most prominent feature of descriptive analysis is that it is a method used in research where its conceptual and theoretical structure is clearly revealed in advance. Direct quotations are often made in order to convey the views of participants observed or interviewed (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011).

In this study, direct quotations are provided from participants who were observed or interviewed in order to contribute to validity and reliability. The purpose of descriptive analysis is to present the findings to the reader in an organized and interpreted manner (Kuzu, 2005, p.71). The researcher kept a research journal to record the data he observed before, during and after the class for the study he conducted in his classroom. In addition, before and after the study, thought paragraph writing activities were done and the findings were evaluated. The thought paragraph samples written by the students were scored according to the thought paragraph scale created by the researcher.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

During the observation process that took place prior to the activities, 6 students were determined as the focus student group in the classroom where the implementation took place. During the interviews with the focus group, the students' opinions about writing paragraphs, thought paragraphs, and types of paragraphs were sought. The students who participated in the focus group interview were asked whether they had written a paragraph about any subject before, whether they had knowledge about the paragraph

types and thought paragraphs, and whether they had encountered such a writing task before. Some of the answers of students are presented below as an example.

"They've never said write a paragraph before. Our teachers wanted us to write long texts. They would say, "kid, try to fill in the page." Our teachers used to give us a proverb and ask us to write an essay about it. We would write an essay about this proverb." (Focus Group Interview 1, S1)

"It's the first time I've heard that there are types of a paragraph, teacher. Maybe our teacher explained, but I may have forgotten." (Focus Group Interview 1, S3)

"I didn't hear it either. If our teacher had explained, we would know for sure. My Turkish is good. I get above 90 in exams." (Focus Group Interview 1, S5)

"No one told us what a thought paragraph is. No one asked us to write a thought paragraph. Do you guys remember?" (Focus Group Interview 1, S6)

"I don't know what a thought paragraph is. If I guess by the name, I think it's the paragraph that tells us what we think. But I've never heard of a thought paragraph before." (Focus Group Interview 1, S2)

When the responses received from the students are examined in the focus group meeting, it is seen that the students do not have any information about the paragraph. It is understood that the students consider the writing activities done as composition writing. Students were asked to write a composition for each writing task. It is understood from the answers of the students that there is no detailed explanation about a paragraph, the characteristics of a paragraph and the types of a paragraph in Turkish lessons.

Before starting the action research, the Turkish teachers working in the school were interviewed. During the interviews, the teachers were asked about their thoughts about and practices in paragraph education in their lessons. Some of the responses from teachers are given below.

"I do not fully address paragraphs in Turkish lessons. Because I think students learn about paragraphs in previous grades. We consider them ready to write." (English Teacher 1)

"As Turkish lessons are intense, I do not specifically allocate time for paragraphs." (English Teacher 3)

"The curriculum does not focus on the paragraph as a learning outcome. So, I don't teach paragraphs in detail. In fact, I've never taught it." (English Teacher 4)

"I give my students specific topics and ask them to write compositions. I have asked them to write different types of articles according to text types. Writings like essays, dialogues. However, there is a general perception in students, they see all kinds of writing as compositions. They forget the types of text very quickly." (English Teacher 7)

"I've never given any homework to students about writing thought paragraphs. I never mentioned thought paragraphs, actually, any paragraph types. I didn't see the need for much detail, to be honest." (English Teacher 5)

In interviews with Turkish teachers, it was seen that the types of paragraphs are not covered in detail in lessons generally. It is understood that students are given writing tasks, but the given writing tasks are evaluated as an essay rather than a paragraph. The fact that students are unaware of the logic that a text consists of sentences and then sentences constitute paragraphs is due to their lack of education in this regard. The fact that paragraph types and the characteristics are not addressed in Turkish lessons is the main reason why students have problems in this regard.

The researcher had a conversation with students in the first lesson before starting activities and trainings aimed to improve the ability of students to write thought paragraphs. As a result of this conversation, he noted the impressions he obtained in his research journal. According to the researcher's journal, the following are the statements of the students on the thought paragraphs.

"Before I started applications and activities, I wanted to gather preliminary information about the students' views on thought paragraphs. I asked them various questions in this context. I observed that students have difficulty defining the paragraph. The students said they didn't know the parts of the paragraph. Some students said that there are introduction, development, and results sections in a composition, and that these sections are paragraphs. The fact that the students did not know about the characteristics, sections, and types of the paragraph made me think that this issue was covered superficially in the lessons, and even not addressed at all." (Researcher's Diary, 09.10.2019)

In the first lesson of the class the researcher conducted the study (on 09.10.2019), he provided students information about the action research process after surveying their knowledge about paragraphs. Trainings and activities were facilitated for a total of 14 weeks, with 1 Turkish lesson hour each week. Before starting education and activities, the researcher conducted an activity and asked students to write a thought paragraph to determine their current level in thought paragraphs. The same activity was facilitated on the 14th week of the action research study and the first activity and the final activity were compared. Students were given several topics to write a thought paragraph. Students were given 7 subjects as preliminary testing of action research to write a thought paragraph. The subjects given to students are listed below.

- a. Write your thoughts on the habit of reading books.

- b. Write your thoughts on patience and perseverance.
- c. Write your thoughts on respect.
- d. What do you think greed is? Should people be content with what they have? Write your thoughts.
- e. Write your thoughts on the benefits of forests.
- f. What do you think of the misuse of technology, write your thoughts on this subject.
- g. Write your thoughts on a topic of your choice.

An activity related to writing a thought paragraph was distributed to students. Students were asked to write their thoughts on at least 2 of the subjects involved in this activity. Below are some of the examples of writing from the first activity which served as a pre-test for writing. Some of the students' answers to the questions are presented below. Students generally have problems writing a thought paragraph. The thought paragraphs written by students are evaluated by the researcher according to the thought paragraph evaluation scale.

a. Write your thoughts on the habit of reading.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented in The First Week of the Study:

"I think we should read a lot of books. I think it's good to read a book. I've been reading books all the time." (Pre-Test, S1)

This student's thought paragraph written before the study started got a score of 3 when evaluated according to the thought paragraph evaluation scale. This paragraph did not get any scores on the evaluation items of providing information on a topic, explains the thoughts of the author on the topic, provokes the reader to think, provides supporting ideas for the reason why the author believes in the argument, a paragraph consists of three sections with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and the conclusion sentence, using ways to develop ideas, and not finishing the paragraph before the idea is complete.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"Reading a book is a good behavior. I think it's a better behavior to get into the habit of reading books. In order for a person to develop the habit of reading books, it must be a book that he loves first. Everyone has an interest. For example, I love reading adventure books. I've read that the number of people who like to read adventure books is high. If you make a person who loves to read adventure books read historical books, he might get bored. Even if he reads that book, he might not understand because he won't do it very fondly, and he might get bored of reading books. I think it's necessary to recommend books to people on the subjects they love first to give people the habit of reading books. If people read the books they love more, the more they want to read other books. For example, this is what happened with me. It's good to have a habit of reading books. To acquire this behavior, we need to read a lot of books about the subjects we love." (Post-test, S1)

This student's paragraph written after the activities implemented during the study received a score of 10 when evaluated according to the thought paragraph evaluation scale.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented in The First Week of the Study:

"I have books at home, and I put them in my library after reading them. I'll show my kids in the future. So that they read them." (Pre-Test, S4)

The paragraph the student wrote before the study started didn't receive any scores when evaluated according to the thought paragraph evaluating scale. The paragraph written by the student does not have the characteristics of the thought paragraph.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"The habit of reading books is a very nice habit which is very difficult to develop. I love reading books. I built myself a little library with the books I read at home. I have 95 books. People find it hard to develop the habit of reading. I think to get into the habit of reading books, you have to find the right book first. So, you're going to find a good book that's going to make you love reading first. Then, the more you read it, the more you'll want to read. When that book is finished, you're going to get a book again, and over time you're going to look and see that you love to read books. You developed the habit of reading. Reading books teaches us useful information, rules and good behaviors. Let's not forget that smart people read a lot of books. Scientists read a lot of books. We should read all the time. I think every book is a new world of information. I invite everyone to read a book." (Post-Test, S4)

The paragraph written by the student after the activities done in the study received 10 points when evaluated according to the scale.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented in The First Week of the Study:

"Reading a book is something everyone wants. For example, I want to read a lot of books, but sometimes I have a lot of homework. Sometimes I get lazy. But my sister reads a lot of books. I think it's a good thing." (Pre-Test, S7)

The paragraph written before the activities completed in the study received 4 points when evaluated according to the scale. This paragraph did not get any scores on the evaluation items of providing information on a topic, explains the thoughts of the author on the topic, provokes the reader to think, provides supporting ideas for the reason why the author believes in the argument, a paragraph consists of three sections with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and the conclusion sentence, using ways to develop ideas, and not finishing the paragraph before the idea is complete.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"The more you read, the more successful you will be. I think people should read a lot of books to be successful. Books are ladders that lead us to truth and success. We have to climb this ladder to succeed. We have to read a lot of books to get into the habit of reading books. Reading books makes us express ourselves better. It's hard to develop a habit. But I think everyone wants to develop the habit of reading a book which is a beautiful habit. Let's climb the ladder together to succeed." (Post-Test, S7)

The paragraph written by the student after the activities received 9 points when evaluated according to the evaluation scale. This paragraph did not receive a score on the evaluation item of thought paragraphs provide information about a topic.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented in The First Week of the Study:

"Reading books is beneficial for us. I always read when I go to the village. I don't have friends there. The Internet does not work well there. I get bored so I read. I think you should do it like me. You won't get bored." (Pre-Test, S19)

The paragraph written before the activities completed in the study received 3 points when evaluated according to the scale. This paragraph did not get any scores on the evaluation items of providing information on a topic, does not include off-topic thoughts, provokes the reader to think, provides supporting ideas for the reason why the author believes in the argument, a paragraph consists of three sections with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and the conclusion sentence, the idea is expressed in a consistent way, and not finishing the paragraph before the idea is complete.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"I think reading books is very useful. Reading always leads us to good and doing good. The habit of reading books creates good behavior in humans. We don't waste our time when reading. That way, our time is well used, and we'll learn something. Those who read books speak well, they express themselves well. The benefits of reading books are too many to count. I think everyone should develop this useful habit." (Post-Test, S19)

The paragraph written by the student after the activities received 8 points when evaluated according to the evaluation scale. This paragraph did not receive a score on the evaluation items of thought paragraphs provide information about a topic and using ways to develop an idea.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"My teachers always say read books. There is also reading homework. So, I must read. Sometimes I like the books I read, sometimes I get very bored." (Pre-Test, S23)

The paragraph written by the student before the activities received 1 point when evaluated according to the evaluation scale. This paragraph got this score only on the item of a paragraph explains what the author thinks about the topic.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"I think reading improves us. We have to read books to improve ourselves. I think reading books improves our vocabulary in the first place. As we read a lot of books, we learn new words. It helps us speak correctly and meaningfully. I think people who read books express themselves well. We have to read a lot of books to express ourselves better." (Post-Test, S23)

The paragraph written by the student after the activities received 8 points when evaluated according to the evaluation scale. This paragraph did not receive points on the evaluation items of thought paragraphs provide information about a topic and using ways to develop an idea.

b. Write your thoughts on patience and perseverance

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"I don't think patience is something everyone can do. I can't be too patient, for example. Perseverance and patience seem to me the same thing. If I don't get too bored, I can actually be patient. But I can't wait because I'm bored right away." (Pre-Test, S3)

The paragraph written by the student before the activities received 1 point when evaluated according to the evaluation scale. This paragraph got this score only on the item of a paragraph explains what the author thinks about the topic.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"If we want something too much, we have to learn to be patient. Being patient means to wait and hang on until what we want happens. Perseverance is to be willing and ambitious in this regard. I try to be patient and determined to succeed in my studies. I'm having a hard time with that. But I know if I'm patient and persevere, I'll be successful. Sometimes I'm patient in my classes, even if I'm having difficulties, and I promise myself I'll make it. And I succeed at the end. Which makes me very happy. Being patient and determined leads us to success. We have to be tenacious and patient for success. We must work tirelessly in the face of difficulties." (Post-Test, S3)

The paragraph written by the student after the activities received 9 points when evaluated according to the evaluation scale. This paragraph did not receive points on the evaluation item of thought paragraphs provide information about a topic.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"I'm a strong person. I don't get sad about anything easily. If I encounter something difficult, I don't give up. I always try to succeed. My father always tells me 'daughter, study', and I listen to him. I study hard. I think all students should do that. Everyone should study hard for their classes." (Pre-Test, S6)

The paragraph written by the student before the activities did not receive any points when evaluated according to the evaluation scale. The paragraph does not have the characteristics of a thought paragraph.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"Patience means to endure all the difficulties. I'm a strong person. Nothing can upset me easily. I struggle in the face of adversity. I show patience and perseverance. Being patient and determined brings us success. We go through a lot that upsets us in our lives. We face a lot of difficulties. The important thing is not to give up in the face of these challenges. To be determined means to continue the desire to fight. I think everything that involves patience and perseverance results with a happy ending. I'm trying to be patient with challenges as much as I can. Being patient and tenacious will help us overcome all obstacles. We must be patient and determined to overcome all the obstacles we face." (Post-Test, S6)

The paragraph written by the student after the activities received 9 points when evaluated according to the evaluation scale. This paragraph did not receive points on the evaluation item of thought paragraphs provide information about a topic.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"Patience is success, I think. Perseverance is also success. One must be patient and determined to succeed. My grandfather always told me to be patient and tenacious. I try to be patient and determined." (Pre-Test, S15)

The paragraph written by the student before the activities received 6 points when evaluated according to the evaluation scale. This paragraph did not get any scores on the evaluation items of providing information on a topic, provokes the reader to think, a paragraph consists of three sections with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and the conclusion sentence, and not finishing the paragraph before the idea is complete.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"Patience is success, I think. Perseverance is also success. If you want to succeed, you have to be patient and determined. I don't think a person can succeed without patience and perseverance. For example, if we were to take the most important test of our lives and our goal was great and we will succeed if we continue towards this goal patiently and determinedly. If we give up in the face of adversity, we fail. But if we continue our work with patience and determination, we will finally achieve success. Patience and

perseverance are the key to success. Anyone who wants to succeed should work with determination in the face of difficulties without giving up." (Post-Test, S15)

The paragraph written by the student after the activities received 9 points when evaluated according to the evaluation scale. The student did lose points on the criterion of a thought paragraph provides information on a subject.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"Patience and perseverance are things that should happen when doing a job. If we want to succeed in the task, we have to be patient and determined. Otherwise we won't make it." (Pre-Test, S28)

The paragraph written by the student before the activities received 5 points when evaluated according to the scale. This paragraph did not get any scores on the evaluation items of providing information on a topic, provokes the reader to think, a paragraph consists of three sections with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, uses ways to develop an idea, and the conclusion sentence, and not finishing the paragraph before the idea is complete.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"You have to wait to achieve some things. You have to resist the challenges of that thing. And while we wait, we have to wait with determination. You know, they always tell us about the patience of Job. I think that should be an example to all of us. We must be patient in the face of adversity, just as he has been patient. We should never give up. We must continue to work and strive without giving up the fight. That's when we get the success we want. We have to wait and be patient and work with determination to succeed. Wait, and be patient and keep fighting with determination. And pray for success." (Post-Test, S28)

The paragraph written by the student after the activities received 10 points when evaluated according to the scale.

c. Write your thoughts on respect

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"I have a lot of respect for my elders. I think everyone should be respectful toward their elders. In the future, when we are older, then we would be respected." (Pre-Test, S1)

The paragraph written by the student before the activities received 5 points when evaluated according to the scale. This paragraph did not get any scores on the evaluation items of providing information on a topic, provokes the reader to think, a paragraph consists of three sections with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, uses ways to

develop an idea, and the conclusion sentence, and not finishing the paragraph before the idea is complete.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"I think the word "respect" is a very nice concept. We have to respect all living things in the world. Everyone has to be respectful of each other. I think the young ones should be respectful of the elders first. That's our tradition, actually. Because that's how they always raised us, our elders. If we act respectfully, I'm sure we'll be treated with respect in the future. If you want respect, you have to be respectful." (Post-Test, S1)

The paragraph written by the student before the activities received 9 points when evaluated according to the scale. This paragraph did not get any scores on the evaluation items of providing information on a topic, provokes the reader to think, includes supporting ideas for the reason why the author believes in his argument, a paragraph consists of three sections with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, uses ways to develop an idea, and the conclusion sentence, and not finishing the paragraph before the idea is complete.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"Respect means acting without being mad at anyone. If we don't get mad at people, we'll treat them with respect. I always treat the elders in my family with respect. They treat me with respect. We never get mad at each other." (Pre-Test, Ö4)

The paragraph the student wrote before starting his action research practices received 4 points after the thought paragraph was evaluated on a scale of evaluation.

This paragraph did not get any scores on the evaluation items of providing information on a topic, provokes the reader to think, a paragraph consists of three sections with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, uses ways to develop an idea, and the conclusion sentence, and not finishing the paragraph before the idea is complete

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"I think respect means behaving without being angry or mad at anyone. To pay homage to our elders. First of all, we must always respect our family elders and the people around us. We have to act politely and talk with them without breaking their hearts. Because sometimes kids can be disrespectful with their words. I think those who respect are loving. People love you because you're respectful. Let's respect everyone and be loving without being angry with anyone, without upsetting anyone. Let's love and respect each other." (Post-Test, S4)

The student got a score of 8 with this paragraph written following the activities. The student lost points on the criteria of a thought paragraph should provide information on a subject, and ways to develop an idea are used.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"We must treat our elders with respect." (Pre-Test, S7)

The student received 1 point on this paragraph written before the activities started. The student received this score only from the criterion of the topic is explicitly stated.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"Respect means not being hurtful to our elders. I always respect especially my parents. We must not make mistakes in respecting our elders. Being respectful makes us better. I think people like students who are respectful. They say this kid is very respectful. We should always be respectful. Because respect is a virtue." (Post-Test, S7)

The student got a score of 8 with this paragraph written following the activities. The student lost points on the criteria of a thought paragraph should provide information on a subject, and a paragraph consists of three sections: topic sentence, supportive sentences, and a conclusion sentence.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"I think respect is a very important act. I'm respectful. I treat everyone with respect, younger or older. For example, I helped an old man while I was waiting at the bus stop a week ago. Then I showed him a place on the bus to sit." (Pre-Test, S27)

The paragraph written by the student before the activities received 5 points when evaluated according to the scale. This paragraph did not get any scores on the evaluation items of providing information on a topic, provokes the reader to think, includes supportive sentences, a paragraph consists of three sections with a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and the conclusion sentence, and not finishing the paragraph before the idea is complete.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"I think respect is a very important act. I'm respectful. Respect, I think, is something that needs to be given to everyone without regardless of their age. For example, it's respectful to give your seat to elderly on the bus. If we treat them with respect now, then when we get older, others will treat us with respect. If you pay respect, you'll get respect. So, we have to be respectful to everyone all the time and everywhere." (post-Test, S27)

The student got a score of 9 with this paragraph written following the activities. The student lost points on the criterion of a thought paragraph should provide information on a subject.

d. What do you think greed is? Should people be content with what they have? Write your thoughts on this topic.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"It's not a good thing to be greedy. No one likes you when that's the case. You'll be excluded in class. You would not have any friends. Then you'll be down. I think not being greedy is best." (Pre-Test, S11)

The student received 1 point on this paragraph written before the activities started. The student received this score only from the criterion of including the thoughts of the author in the paragraph.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"I think greed is not being content with what you have and wanting all the time. I think one should settle for what they have. First of all, one must appreciate what he has and strive not to lose them. As our ancestors said, don't go farther and fare worse. We have to settle for what we have. Sometimes we want to get something. For example, we see a friend with a nice phone. We'd like the same one right now. I don't think we should overdo it. You shouldn't be a wannabe. We need to appreciate what we have. We have to give them the necessary value. Nobody likes greed. We shouldn't be greedy which is a behavior that's unpopular with society." (Post-Test, S11)

The student got a score of 9 with this paragraph written following the activities. The student lost points on the criterion of a thought paragraph should provide information on a subject.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"If you don't settle for what you've got, you can lose them too. Then you'll be very upset, but what good is it. I don't think we should be greedy. I don't think it's a good thing." (Pre-Test, S30)

The student got a score of 2 with this paragraph written before the activities. The student received this score on the criteria of the topic is explicitly stated and the author's thoughts on the topic are provided in a paragraph.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"Greed is not being content with what you have but having an eye on others. Greedy people always want more when they don't have the right. Greed is a disliked behavior for people. No one likes greedy ones. I think they're excluded in society. Greed is like stealing, to me. As a result, we need to appreciate what we have. We shouldn't have eyes on other things. If we don't appreciate what we have, we can lose them. If we put an eye on what other

people have, we can upset them as well. Don't be greedy, don't upset yourself of somebody else." (Post-Test, S30)

The student got a score of 9 with this paragraph written following the activities. The student lost points on the criterion of a thought paragraph should provide information on a subject.

e. Write your thoughts on the benefits of forests

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"Forests benefit a lot. I love forests. I want everyone to love the forests." (Pre-Test, S11)

The student received a score of 3 with this paragraph written before the activities were implemented. The student received this score by addressing the criteria that the topic is clearly stated, the thoughts of the author is explained, and off-topic thoughts are not included in a paragraph.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"I think the forest is where different trees are found. Forests are natural areas. I think there are a lot of benefits that forests provide to humans. Scientists have done much research on this subject. Oxygen is the most important of these benefits. Forests produce oxygen to clean up our air. They also prevent natural disasters. They prevent a variety of disasters, such as flooding and landslides. Forests also host a variety of creatures. The place of forests in our lives is very important. The benefits of forests are quite high. We must protect the forests because of all this." (Pre-Test, S11)

The student got a score of 9 with this paragraph written following the activities. The student lost points on the criterion of utilizing ways to develop an idea.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"If the trees in the forest don't produce oxygen, we can't breathe. I think protecting forests is important for that. We have to protect the forests. We need to water the trees we see, so they don't wither." (Pre-Test, S30)

This paragraph was evaluated according to the thought paragraph evaluation scale, however, did not receive any points.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"Trees in the forest produce oxygen. People can breathe more easily because of them. Forests are spacious and natural places. Sometimes we go out there, have a picnic, go for a walk and rest. We should appreciate the forests and protect them. We mustn't let the forests

get dirty. We shouldn't throw our trash into nature. Let's protect our forests for breath and not let them disappear." (Post-Test, S30)

The paragraph written by the student after the activities of the action research study were implemented and received a score of 2 points when evaluated. The student received points from the criteria of a thought paragraph include a clear statement of the topic and what the author thinks on the topic.

f. What do you think misuse of technology is? Write your thoughts on this subject.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"I think technology is a good thing. I don't use technology wrong. And you shouldn't use it wrong." (Pre-Test, S8)

The paragraph written by the student before the activities of the action research study were implemented and received a score of 3 points when evaluated. The student received points from the criteria of a thought paragraph include a clear statement of the topic, what the author thinks on the topic, and off-topic thoughts are not included.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"I think technology is a very good thing. It's something that needs to be used for people's benefits. When the history of science is examined, we see that inventions and instruments are always done for the benefit of mankind. I think every technological product is made for a purpose. That's why we need to use technological products for their purpose. For example, our phones were made for communication. But we usually use it to play games. We shouldn't spend too much time with technological tools like computers and phones. Otherwise, our health could deteriorate. We shouldn't misuse technology for our health." (Post-Test, S8)

The paragraph written by the student after the action research activities received 10 points upon evaluation.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

"People's health can deteriorate. If you play games too much on computers, your eyes may deteriorate. I don't play games on a lot of computers. I usually do my research homework. Sometimes I play when I get bored." (Pre-Test, S10)

The paragraph the student wrote before starting the action research practices did not score at all as the paragraph does not have the characteristics of a thought paragraph.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"Misuse of technology means over-using technological tools. If we spend a lot of time with technological products, our health may deteriorate. For example, if we play too many computer games, our eyes could deteriorate. Spending a lot of time on TV, on the phone and the Internet can disrupt what we do daily. We won't have time to do our homework. Our lessons will be disrupted, and our success may decrease. Over time, we'll be addicted to technology. I think technology should only be used for its purpose. We need to use technology products as much as we need and to fit their purpose." (Post-Test, S10)

The paragraph written by the student after the action research activities received 9 points upon evaluation. The student did not address the criteria of thought paragraphs provide information on a topic.

g. Write your thoughts on a topic of your choice

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

A. Student's choice: Violence against women

"I'm very sad about the news on TV on violence against women. I wish everyone would be happy if there wasn't any violence against women. I don't know why people are doing that. I don't want women to experience violence." (Pre-Test, S3)

The paragraph the student wrote before starting his action research practices received 4 points after the thought paragraph was evaluated on a scale of evaluation. The student received points on the criteria of stating the topic clearly, explaining the author's opinion, not including off-topic thoughts, and addressing the thought in the paragraph consistently.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"I'm a 12-year-old student. I'm very sad about the news of violence against women on TV. I didn't want to be silent as a girl. There's a growing surge in violence against women. According to research, violence against women is seen all over Turkey, unfortunately. I think as a society, we need to address this urgent. In order to avoid such incidents, people must first be informed. Maybe the government officials should do something important about it. Otherwise, we won't be able to prevent these painful events. If heaven is at the feet of mothers, why is there still violence against women? I don't get it, to be honest. Violence against women must stop. Our people should be trained in this regard. As a society, we must stop violence against women." (Post-Test, S3)

The paragraph written by the student after the action research activities received 10 points upon evaluation.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the First Week of the Study:

B. Student's choice of topic: Street animals

"I feel very sorry for the animals who walk around the street unattended. I want them to have homes. But for some reason, those animals are still on the streets. They may starve. I think it'd be better if we give them food." (Pre-Test, S29)

The paragraph written by the student before the activities of the action research study were implemented and received a score of 3 points when evaluated. The student received points from the criteria of a thought paragraph include a clear statement of the topic, what the author thinks on the topic, and off-topic thoughts are not included.

Thought Paragraph Writing Activity Implemented on the Last Week of the Study:

"Stray animals, I think, is our bleeding wound. I'm very sad to see stray and lonely animals around the streets. Municipalities are doing a good job on this. There are shelters set up by municipalities for stray animals. I think these shelters are not enough. It's not enough for street animals. I think municipalities should do more work on this. This world is a world in which we all live. Stray animals also have a right to live freely. I think every person should take care of a stray animal. But the most important thing is, I think, we need to investigate why these animals are on the street. Some vacuous people buy puppies just for status and enthusiasm. Then they don't want to care for those dogs. And finally, they let them out on the street. I think we need to prevent this. Let's not let the animals go out on the street. Let's take care of them. Let's not forget that stray animals are alive and have as much right to live as we do. Every living thing is important and valuable." (Post-Test, S29)

The paragraph written by the student after the action research activities received 10 points upon evaluation.

Examples of sections from the researcher's journal on the course of the action research study are presented below.

"After applying the first pre-test writing event to students, the students spoke among themselves -although I could hear them- that the writing job was very boring. They said, 'I wish he didn't do writing-based activities', and some said, 'what if we talked, had conversations, teacher, instead of writing'. I tried to motivate the students by saying, 'We're going to write and talk in the process.'" Some students said, 'my teacher, I can't write when I'm asked to write, but if you ask me to talk, I can talk for hours.' As far as I can see, there is a bias against writing in the students, and we've done some game-like activities to alleviate bias a little bit and get their attention." (Research Journal, 16.10.2019)

"This is the 6th week of research. Everyone's so eager. I'm very motivated by the interest in students. I wish the ability to write could be taught as a separate course in schools."

Because the name of the course which is writing activity (which the students have named among themselves) motivates them, and the level of readiness is quite high." (Research Journal, 13.11.2019)

"I observe that the students have come a long way in writing a thought paragraph on the 9th week of the research. Now most students can easily write their thoughts on any subject. Of course, they could write before, but after the activities and practices, they learned how the paragraphs they wrote could be a thought paragraph. Now they can write more informed thought paragraphs." (Research journal, 04.12.2019)

"It's the 12th week of the study and we did our last activity. I'd say the students have learned the specifics of thought paragraphs. They don't encounter problems in writing thought paragraphs anymore. 12 weeks of education and activities have made visible improvements in students' thought paragraph writing skills." (Research Journal, 25.12.2019)

Examples from student journal entries during the study are presented below.

"I was intrigued by the teacher who came to our class today. It seemed interesting to me to write my thoughts." (Student journal, 09.10.2019)

"First, we created sentences from words. Then we formed paragraphs with sentences. It is like puzzle but I'm enjoying this course." (Student journal, 30.10.2019)

"This lesson seems to be very detailed. We're just going to write a few lines of paragraphs. Is writing a paragraph so detailed? Or is it the teacher making a big deal out of it. I don't know. But I can do the activities. " (Student Journal, 16.10.2019)

"I've learned that there are varieties of paragraphs. I've never heard of it before. I like doing the activities. It's like we're learning to solve puzzles." (Student Journal, 27.11.2019)

"It felt different to write a thought paragraph at first. But I learned the technique. It wasn't too hard. I see it as a pattern now. I'm thinking in my head first. Then, I decide what to write and then I write in that box." (Student journal, 04.12.2019)

"If it continues like this, writing compositions will get easier. We're learning good things. I wish there were apps for tablets or smartphones so that we could write on apps. I think it's outdated to write on paper." (Student journal, 13.11.2019)

"It's very interesting, a paragraph has its own introduction, development and conclusion sections. But then when we were writing compositions, we were writing introduction,

development and results section. We were still writing three sections. I'm going to ask the teacher next week. I'm a little confused." (Student journal, 27.11.2019)

"Let me confess to you, diary. I got bored at first. Engage in writing, do activities. But I started to get perfect scores in Turkish practice exams. I like this very much." (Student journal, 06.11.2019)

"Wow, friend, writing paragraphs also had techniques like recipes. But it's good. I'm glad there's such practice." (Student journal, 20.11.2019)

"I'm not bored of writing paragraphs anymore. You have to learn everything. It was nice to learn gradually. I can write easier now. Before, I'd think and think about what I wanted to write but wouldn't find anything to write." (Student journal, 04.12.2019)

"I understood, friend, everything has a trick. I'm not bored of writing anymore. If you find out how, you can even be a writer. The important thing is to learn all the stages." (Student journal, 18.12.2019)

The impressions that students noted in their journals during the action research process provided valuable contributions to the course and direction of the research. When the notes taken in the student journals are evaluated, it is seen that they do not have detailed information about the paragraph. Students considered writing a thought paragraph as an easy activity in the first place. Students who thought it was about writing a few lines understood the importance of the work when activities started, and information was provided. It is understood from the student logs that their prejudices against writing were broken at the end of the action study. When student logs are evaluated, it is seen that students gained experience in writing thought paragraphs, learned how to write thought paragraphs, and had a positive attitude towards writing.

5. Discussion, Results and Recommendations

The purpose of this action research study was to improve the thought paragraph writing skills of 7th grade students. The research was planned for a 14-week period and a total of 25 activities were implemented with students during the study. During the research, the interviews held with Turkish teachers, the journals kept by the researcher and students contributed to the course of the study. As a result of the research, it was observed that the students had a preconception against writing before starting the action research study. It is reflected in the student logs that the students did not have detailed information about the types of paragraph. According to the findings of the study, it is understood that the students did not receive a paragraph-focused education, and that the types of paragraphs are briefly mentioned in Turkish courses. This may have led students to have a prejudice about types of paragraphs and writing.

It is understood that the expressions reflected in the students' journals that they did not know the types of paragraphs, thought paragraphs were not mentioned in lessons before, and did not write thought paragraphs. Considering that the basis of thought essays consist of thought paragraphs, students not receiving detailed education in writing thought paragraph may be a reason for students to have problems writing. However, the Turkish Course Curriculum stipulates that students should be able to effectively explain their thoughts on a subject in writing (Meb, 2019, p.8). The fact that students would not be able to obtain this learning outcome stated in the Turkish Course Curriculum is due to not allocating enough time to writing thought paragraphs. This may be due to a lack of class time in Turkish lessons or the fact that the teachers superficially cover it. Current research can be done on the causes of students' problems in writing thought essays. The reasons for this will help eliminate the problems in this regard.

The underlying issue in students having problems in writing thought essays is the lack of quality education on this subject. The results found in similar research support the current study (Göğüş, 1978; Yalçın, 1998; Çağınlar ve Oflazoğlu 2002; Çiftçi 2006).

During the 14-week long applications, a total of 25 activities were applied to students from easy to difficult and to complex. Students have undergone a process-based activity that moved from words to sentences, and from sentences to paragraphs. The activities applied to students during the action research were designed to achieve deductive and inductive learning, to connect pieces, to teach students the skills to think comprehensively and more qualitatively about an event or subject. It is understood from both student logs and student written examples that their thought paragraph writing skills improved gradually.

As a result of this action study, it was revealed that if students were provided with a comprehensive thought paragraph writing training, students would write thought paragraphs at the desired level. It is thought that if students are given more comprehensive training on paragraph types, students' problems with writing will be reduced.

When applying thought paragraph writing activities, it was observed that students had difficulty in activities, especially in completing a sentence with their own statements, expressing with a different word, sorting their thoughts according to certain conditions, directing them to different thoughts, and ways to develop a thought. This shows us the importance of the relationship between the ability to write and cognitive processes. Before writing a thought paragraph, the student enters a cognitive production process on the subject. According to Güneş, writing is transferring the thoughts structured in the brain onto paper and re-arranging through various cognitive processes (2007: 159). It is thought that it would be useful to benefit from the thought education course training program while teaching writing skills. The teaching program can be updated or re-designed to include thought paragraph writing skills comprehensively by using the thinking education training program. Considering the contribution of writing skills to the mental development of students, a writing skills course can be included within the scope of compulsory courses.

When the studies conducted in the literature were evaluated in general, it was observed that most of them could not go beyond case studies and could not solve the problems encountered in paragraph writing teaching. In addition, it was observed that there are not many application studies focusing on paragraphs. This leads to the inability to solve problems in writing skills. Inconsistencies in paragraphs which are the basic units of text directly affect all the text. Therefore, first activities focusing on conveying thoughts at a sentence level, then at a paragraph level should be included. In this way, a significant development can be achieved in eliminating the problems experienced in expressing feelings and thoughts on any issue in writing.

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IN 7TH GRADE STUDENTS: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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