

# Critical Discourse Analysis of Elementary School Teachers' Writership Identities\*

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## Abstract

This study aimed to identify elementary school teachers' perceptions of their writing experiences and examine the factors forming their writership identities by analyzing their perceptions. This study is a phenomenological study conducted with six elementary school teachers. Data were collected through a semi-structured interview form. The data were analyzed based on Gee's (2010) theory of discourse. The results showed that the teachers described writing as an essential skill used for transferring emotions and thoughts. They stated that language skills were interrelated and that there was a need to have a certain set of skills to be able to write. The development of technology had reduced the need for classical writing, and social prejudices had reduced the teachers' willingness to write. The teachers consider themselves neither very successful nor very unsuccessful writers but a medium level in general. They were happy when writing, even though they did not like expressing their feelings. They thought that writing successfully had a profound effect on academic achievement and that the largest share in educating individuals to be good writers was in teachers' hands.

## Keywords:

Writing, Writership Identity, Elementary School Teachers, Critical Discourse Analysis

## Introduction

### *Writing and Identity*

Identity, in general, is a concept that explains how people perceive themselves and the world in which they live, describing how an individual shapes his/her relationship (Bourne, 2002; Young, 1996). Identity is, at the same time, an individual's awareness level about his/her abilities and the recognition of these abilities that can be used in the future (Ivanič, 1998; Norton, 1997).

Identity has an impact on many aspects of human life, as well as the development of literacy through individuals' cultural structures and social dynamics (Norton & Toohey, 2004). Messages that a person sees, hears, reads, and transfers written or verbally in his/her environment affect the person; he/she determines his/her own lifestyle through



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the inferences he/she gets from these messages (Bakhtin, 2010). According to Collier (2010), identity is associated with literacy, listening and speaking skills that combine to establish communication.

If an individual is defined as a whole formed by a combination of his/her socio-cultural environment and experiences, the lifestyle, which is called identity, also shapes his/her opinions about writing (Kauffman, 2006). According to Collier (2010), the reflections of an individual's identity to social life and the way he/she transfers his/her messages in his/her writings have a strong mutual relationship that cannot be distinguished from each other.

The act of writing should not be considered merely transferring feelings, thoughts, and dreams of an individual to other individuals, because the act of writing also gives clues about how one sees and represents himself/herself. Writing has social, cultural, and individual dynamics that affect individuals' writing as a whole and give the writing an identity pertinent to an individual (Hyland, 2002). According to Young (1996), individuals' identities as writers are formed by how they make sense of writing, their proficiency in writing activities, their perceptions of writing capacities, the value they give to the act of writing, and their past writing activities. The beliefs and thoughts that an individual begins possessing in all these areas at an early age shape the basis of the individual's writer identity (Seban & Tavşanlı, 2015).

#### *Writer Identities of Teachers*

Research in the last two decades, emphasized that professional development of teachers and their identity structures are shaped by their culture and environment in which they are raised (Sachs, 2003; Troman, 2008). How teachers express themselves in writing is also a grab-attention issue for researchers about teacher identities reflecting the perceptions of teachers about their professional development and what type of teacher they are (Danielewicz, 2014). It is especially important that elementary school teachers should have more basic and structured writer identities, because they help their students practice their first literacy experience and the literacy studies conducted by elementary school teachers involve processes that students will experience writing for the first time (Bourne, 2002, Sulak, 2018).

It is known that literacy guidance provided to students at this stage is of great importance in the formation students' social and writer identities (McCarthy, 2001). Classroom environment, peers, family, and the environment, in which the students live and interact, are of great importance in the period when

students perform their first writing activities (Otto, 2016). However, in this context, it is safe to say that teachers are one step ahead of the others because they manage writing process in person.

#### *Background for the Study*

When teachers dominate instructional streaming while teaching language, they indeed demonstrate their writer identities (Ivanič, 1994). When this is the case, it shapes students' thoughts on writing and serves as a basic structure for the creation of their writer identities (Pittam, Elander, Lusher, Fox & Payne, 2009). It is also necessary to analyze and know teachers' writing experiences in educational planning and recognize the values about writership, and learn their opinions on how to help to students to be effective writers (Johnson, 2007; Parr & Campbell, 2011). This is because teachers' writer identities and attitudes and perceptions about writing play an important role in the selection of instructional/pedagogical methods and approaches they use to improve students writings. It is known that the methods preferred in the curriculum and writing instruction have a significant effect on students' writing development (Freedman, 1994). For example, techniques such as peer feedback, self-assessment, self-correcting, self-revising, and sharing are highlighted in the process-based writing approach (Calkins 1986; Culham, 2010; Graves, 1983; Johnson, 2008; Tompkins, 2005; Tompkins, 2010) and they create differences in the way students evaluate, modify, and share writer identities. Similarly, the writer workshop arrangement highlights teamwork and collaborative/collective action approaches. Thus, it is assumed that such activities positively contributes to students' writer identities in terms of collective action, sharing, and taking responsibility (Bulut, 2017).

#### *The Purpose of the Study*

This study aimed to obtain the discourses, thoughts and reflections of elementary school teachers on their writing experiences, analyze these discourses, and examine the formation of the writers' identity by the following parameters.

- How does the teachers' situated meaning affect a his or her identity?
- How do cultural models affects teachers' writer identities?
- How do individuals' figure words affect their writer identities?
- How does language as a social practice affects the identity of teachers as a writer?
- How the teachers' situated identities affect their writer identities?

In this way, it will be revealed what factors shape the teachers' writer identities. Besides, reflections on language (discourses) used as a social practice on writer identity will be examined.

## Method

### Research Approach

This study was carried out within the frame of descriptive phenomenology. Phenomenological studies generally aimed to reveal the perceptions, perspectives and reflections of the individuals on the given phenomenon thus their experiences are important (Creswell, 2012, Merriam, 2009; Reiners, 2012, Sloan & Bowe, 2014).

By doing this it will be possible to examine the teachers' writer identities to determine which conditions formed these identities and whether individuals had a conscious awareness pertaining to them. Thus, the reflection process of the elements shaping an individual's writer identity was described.

### Participants

Phenomenological studies are usually based on the involvement of the participant's as a group who have experience and knowledge about phenomenon under consideration (Merriam, 2009). Hence, the criterion-sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods, was utilized by the study. The criterion-sampling method requires individuals to meet certain criteria to be included in a study (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). Preliminary interviews were made with 20 people among over roughly 1000 elementary school teachers who have working still as a teacher in a big city of Turkey. The following criteria have been checked to include or exclude an individual from the participant pool.

- Having at least two years of teaching experience.
- Keeping a diary at any point in their lives.
- Actively performing act of writing in their lives:
  - to solve a problem
  - as a means of relaxation
  - to share information
  - to attain an academic task, and so forth
- Considering the extracurricular activities with students in writing classes.
- Using diverse writing tools actively (e.g., internet-based applications, communication tools on smartphones, social media accounts, and letters).

Six teachers were included in the study according to this criteria. Table 1 shows the demographic features of the participants.

**Table 1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants**

Participant	Experience			How teachers see themselves as a writer		
	2-10 years	11-19 years	20 and over	Good Writer	Medium Level	Novice
Ayla	X			X		
Banu	X				X	
Cemile			X	X		
Derya	X				X	
Esra	X				X	
Feride		X			X	

As Table 1 depicts, all study participants are female. Four participants had working experience of two and 10 years, one had 11-19 years, and one had 20 years and more working experience. Learning their professional expertise was important to determine how long they have been writing with their students. Teachers working in a city center are considered to be advantageous in using different writing tools specified in the criteria, because the use of technology-based writing tools in city centers are more common due to infrastructures and socio-cultural natures of city centers.

As shown in the Table 1 two of the teachers defined themselves as good writers, while four of them defined as medium-level writers. At this point, the teachers' definition of themselves as good writers and medium-level was considered an important indicator of the active use of writing in their lives. Thus one can expected their writership may have some impact on their writing classes. The names of the teachers are made anonymous by using names given to the participants instead of using fictive names.

### Data Collection Tools

Data were collected through semi-structured interview. The main and probing questions were formulated by taking the existing theories into account. In addition, three elementary school teachers and two academicians were consulted to ensure the quality of the questions. The first form of theory-driven semi-structured interview protocol was finalized by taking suggestions of the field experts and classroom teachers interviewed.

The initial version of the interview guide has 17 questions. After the consultation we reduced number of the questions to 14 (see appendix).

The interviews were conducted in a comfortable environment with voice recording at appropriate times for the researcher and teachers. One participant was interviewed per day. Each interview was transcribed before interviewing with another participant.

Voice recordings and the transcription process were completed within six days. Voice recordings lasted 195 minutes with 55 pages transcriptions. After this we have read all transcripts in the process of creating sub-themes, and these discourses classified according to Gee's (2010) discourse theory.

### **Reliability and Validity**

Even though the collected data were limited, other techniques were incorporated to meet the standards of validity for a naturalistic investigation. First, a methodological triangulation was utilized (Huberman & Miles, 1994) in which both an in-depth qualitative and an enumerative quantitative analysis were conducted for the same qualitative data to triangulate the analysis methods (Patton 1980). Second, the author discussed ongoing research with colleagues during the structuring of the interview protocol and data analysis. These interactions with colleagues served as peer debriefing (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Third, a member check was conducted with the informant through phone calls (informal) and emails to revalidate the built-in codes, themes, and the constructed model.

### **Data Analysis**

This study used a critical discourse analysis method to understand the meanings of the conversations in the context in which they were used. The analysis was used to reveal the underlying relationships in teachers' expressions. Critical discourse analysis is an approach involving different models and methods (Rogers, 2011). The analyses in the study were conducted based on Gee's (2010) theory of discourse. According to Gee (2010), language is an undeniable component of social life. It constitutes one of the important dimensions of social studies. When individuals communicate, they do so by reflecting on their points of view, experiences, knowledge, opinions, values, and beliefs. Therefore, it is expected that the statements that a person articulates give significant clues about the person's way of life, culture, social beliefs, and values related to given topic.

Gee (2011) has stated that discourse must be categorically examined to investigate how the language is used by people. This view advocates that the interview questions should be in accordance with the relevant categories, and the answers given to the related categories should be searched within the discourse. In this study, the categories to be searched in the discourse were as follows:

**Situated Meanings:** This category was determined as the category explaining the meaning of the concepts and statements in the conversations and what was expressed in each statement at a certain moment.

**Cultural Models:** The purpose of this category was to explain (1) the assumptions and beliefs stated in the interviews, (2) the kind of a cultural model used throughout a conversation, (3) the schemes and mental models used to understand and (4) the conversations that take place in a culture.

**Figure Words:** The purpose of this category was to reflect an individual's general feelings, thoughts, and ideas on a subject.

**Social Languages:** The purpose of this category was to explain the function of language and the use of grammar as a social practice.

**Situated Identities:** The aim of this category was to determine (1) conversations types generated by the talking person, (2) how she/he sees herself/himself or what she/he wants to be, and (3) the people and institutions generating such conversations.

### **Findings**

The face-to-face interview with the teachers was transcribed verbatim and Gee's critical discourse analysis approach was used to analyze the interview records. The study examined the following topics: General perspectives about writership and writing studies (figure words), the way the teachers use the language in their conversations about writership and writing (social languages), the extent to which their writing processes and writership identities are affected by models (cultural models), how they consider themselves as writers and their justifications for that (situated identities), and what their writing concepts and statements mean for them (situated meanings). In the following sections we will present the findings related to the common discourses and differentiated discourses of the teachers related to a figure words social languages, cultural models, situated identities and situated meanings.

### Figure Words

This section explored the teachers' overall figure words about writership and writing studies.

#### Common discourses

According to their statements, the teachers considered writing a transfer of their feelings and thoughts. They believe that writing skills are related to other language skills and an important skill that should be used in many areas of life. To be able to write, one must have a certain set of skills. On the side of the writers, writing may promote meaningful learning and overall learning retention. Additionally, well developed writing skills writing skills should be considered necessary for teachers. For example:

*"When it comes to writing, the use of paper and pen to express my thoughts comes to my mind." (Banu)*

*"In my opinion, writing is transferring someone's thoughts and feelings about a topic to a paper or copying what is written in a piece of printed text on a paper." (Derya)*

*"They all complement each other in the first place. If one of them is missing, I think that it will cause that foot to limp. Writing is of equal importance among them. But you cannot write without knowing anything." (Esra)*

#### Differentiated discourses

In these statements, the teachers mentioned that writing was a more difficult skill to use than other language skills, and usually used in more formal settings. It was also stated that writing is related to the educational attainment of a person as well. Some examples of these statements are as follows:

*"As I said, we can express ourselves well while speaking, but expressing yourself through writing is a more difficult skill." (Banu)*

*"To me, being able to write well and express yourself well are signs of an individual's educational attainment." (Cemile)*

#### Cultural Models

How and to what extent elementary school teachers' writing processes and their writer identities are affected by cultural models are presented below:

#### Common discourses

In these statements, the elementary school teachers' writing processes were given and the extent to which their writer identities were affected by cultural models. The participants believed that with the advancement

of technology, the need for classical writing (paper and notebook writing) has been reduced in terms of frequency of its use. They also think that social judgments affected writership identities, and writing in our society was considered a symbol of permanence. For example:

*"I do not think this is just my case. Here, in the developing world, it comes with tablets easily. And they think they will not need it anymore." (Cemile)*

*"No, when we look at today's technology — whether it is a computer, tablet, or a variety of materials — technology makes it less important to write on a notebook or take notes." (Derya)*

*"Of course, criticism would improve my writings. Considering that our society has many people who tend to criticize others for the sake of criticism, this may discourage my enthusiasm. Hence, I do not share my writings due to society's prejudice." (Derya)*

#### Differentiated discourses

With some unique statements, the teachers expressed their writing processes and the extent to which their writership identities were affected by cultural models. These statements revealed that technology intensified the need for writing and writing was not amply preferred in our society. Some examples of these statements are as follows:

*"I always need to write in my daily life. I think the need to write with the phones has become even prevalent. We always use writing when sending messages or writing something on social media." (Esra)*

*"Writing is sometimes used less frequently. I mean, frankly, our society likes verbal communication more than written communication. You know, for a long time, stories, memories, and the like have been conveyed verbally in our society. I think its reflections are in effect." (Cemile)*

#### Social Languages

Some statements were about writership and writing, considering the ways teachers use language.

#### Common discourses

Some statements were about writership and writing reflected the ways the elementary school teachers use language. These statements revealed that the teachers mostly used language for persuasion. For example:

*"Always, of course. So, we use it very often, for example, from taking notes to writing notes. It is something we always use in daily life. I do this ... it is also something indispensable in my professional life. Writing is something we use at every moment in every lesson." (Cemile)*

*"Very Important. After all, it is very important because we, as elementary school teachers, teach writing, or, we write to a student to explain something. It is also very important in this regard." (Derya)*

*"Certainly, I was just going to tell you. I think it certainly improves success. Why? Because, one can hear — I say it verbally and he/she hears. That is auditory. One can write, as well. That is visual. When he/she writes, he/she repeats by himself/herself, too. And, success is definitely getting better." (Feride)*

Apart from the persuasion theme, it was seen that the elementary school teachers used the language to emphasize important points. For example:

*"I believe that writing is important. So, I attach great importance to its readability — of course, it is very important that it makes sense, but it is especially important to be readable. Yeah, yeah. But, that's important to me." (Feride)*

*"It is absolutely important. When there are some important shortcomings that I have to write at certain points, I get a lot of punishment for this. I would say so, frankly. Let me give you an example. There can be places to take notes. They're instant. But I don't have a paper notebook or a pen. But if I don't, I'll forget. So, I'm very uncomfortable in such situations" (Ayla)*

### Differentiated discourses

Certain differentiated statements attracted attention and reflected the way the teachers used the language in their statements about writership and writing. In such statements, the teachers used the language to reflect particular attitudes such as confession, acceptance, and awareness. For example:

*"Frankly, we do nothing about it. For example, teachers ask students to write the text in book sections (that says "write your ideas") on the blackboard. I, sometimes, leave it to them, let them write on their own. That is just because I personally like. If you ask what you are doing, we do nothing other than that. But something must be done." (Ayla)*

*"There is nothing else. As I said, I use it at every stage of my life, but I'm not sufficient; Will I try to be sufficient? No. Because, no matter what I did, it did not work. This is always a shortcoming for me. It's also too painful for me." (Ayla)*

### Situated Identities

There are some statements that the teachers talked about how they considered themselves as writers and how they justified it.

Three of the teachers described themselves as medium-level writers and one described as a good writer. However, it appears that there was a contradiction between the statements of two teachers. It was observed that these two teachers

described themselves as good writers in certain flows of the interview. In contrast, they qualified themselves as medium-level or novice writers in other parts. For example:

*"I write very often. I email my students' parents every evening via WhatsApp. Or, again, I assign homework by writing. I have to explain. I usually do this in writing, not verbally. So, it's important to me that my writing skills are good. I think I'm good at this." (Banu)*

*"I consider myself as an inadequate writer. I think my past experiences may have had an effect on this." (Banu)*

The statements that the teachers talked about how they considered themselves as writers and how they justified it were examined in two parts as common and differentiated discourses as presented below.

### Common discourses

Some common statements in which the teachers expressed how and why (justify) they perceive themselves as better writers. As the teacher emphasized, they feel happier when writing. For example:

*"My feelings about writing are very good. I feel very happy. Although I like to talk a lot, I think that I express myself more comfortably when writing. That is, writing is a superior skill for me." (Cemile)*

Some teachers stated that they did not have a successful writing history. It is important to note that these statements were expressed by the teachers who considered themselves as medium-level writers. As a matter of fact, the teachers indeed stated this as the reason for not being good writers. For example:

*"Until this period of my educational life, there is nothing given to me as an incentive to write. We were preparing a memory book in elementary school. As for writing skills, we were supposed to write what teacher instructed. For example, we can call it dictation or direct text. We were writing the text on a textbook. It was not much. It was limited. I can, therefore, say that I am not very good at that." (Derya)*

It seems that teachers did not consider themselves as good writers, because they did not want to express their feelings in written form. For example:

*"They usually say I write very straight. However, I think I am good at writing official texts, because they do not contain feelings. However, I am not very good at writing, when I have to emphasize my emotions in writing. That is, I cannot write. I listen to music that suits my mood, I watch movies, but I never sat down to write. I may have written to someone to explain something but, to tell you the truth, I have never sat down and written my feelings." (Ayla)*

Some teachers expressed that the current situation of their writership skills is based on their readings and "reading" was one of the most important requirements for writing. For example:

*"Because, such opportunities were given at a very early age. We also read some books. This is very effective, for example, on the fact that I write well."* (Cemile)

One of the important points about how participants considered themselves as writers was about how they enabled transmitting their backgrounds about their writing competencies. In this part, the teachers stated that they were striving to train their students as individuals considerably eager for writing. For example:

*"I conducted writing studies by connecting with their daily experiences, connecting from their past experiences, or offering them unique opportunities — i.e., giving them a chance to be creative. As teachers, we have to be able to do more to turn them into good writers."* (Cemile)

#### **Differentiated discourses**

The teachers externalized individually diverse discourses incorporating verbal insights about their writership and inherent justifications. For example, one teacher implemented writing studies with his/her students; however, he/she did not know whether these studies were scientific. That teacher's statement was as follows:

*"I do not do the work I do very consciously. I just think about it myself at home and what I can do more and get very good feedback. However, I have doubts about how scientific it is."* (Banu)

For another teacher, experiencing a version of success during writing can be considered the most important element in the sense of writing ability.

*"Under the guidance of the school, my poems were even published in a small local newspaper. And, wow, I can do this. My desire to write has risen up like this. And that's how it has improved."* (Cemile)

In another discourse, the expressions were attention-grabbing as the teachers' statements revealed that they held negative experiences with their teachers.

*"Yes, for example, one day, I was taking "religious culture" exam. I started to take the exam with excitement. I forgot to write my name on the exam paper. The teacher hit my head, for example, and told me that "Why did you not write your name?" This is the first thing that I remember about writing. I mean, maybe this is not exactly a reason, but perhaps I could write better if I had no such experience."* (Esra)

These excerpts revealed that the teachers may considerably affect the enhancement of the student-led writing capabilities and capacities.

#### **Situated Meanings**

There were some statements explaining the meaning of what the teachers are talking about writing and writership at that moment, in the relevant context.

#### **Common discourses**

Some statements had sub-themes. First of all, it was stated that writing skills were effective in students' academic success. It was also stated that writing skills were used for communicative purposes, and feedback was essential in writing. For example:

*"Certainly, I was just going to tell you. I think it definitely improves success. Why? Because, one can hear — I say it verbally, he/she hears. That is auditory. One can also write, that is visual. When he/she writes, he/she repeats by himself/herself, too. And, success is definitely getting better."* (Feride)

*"Other than the school, I can leave a note for my child, for example, when I go somewhere. I used to write several letters for communication."* (Feride)

One of the sub-themes, which was abstracted from the participants' predicates, was the part where the characteristics of a good writer were explained. The teachers described better writers as a better observer, reader, and researcher. They described a good writer as someone who holds an extensive vocabulary, a strong ability to externalize emotions, and a better understanding of what he/she writes, as well as a versatile person, and a good listener. For example:

*"I think someone should be a good observer to be a good writer."* (Ayla)

*"If someone has good writing skills, that means he/she is a good observer and a good reader. He/she has extensive vocabulary. He/she can express his/her feelings with appropriate words."* (Ayla)

Another sub-theme derived from the teachers' statements was that a teacher should guide students in their writing works. It was emphasized that elementary school teachers were important for the development of students' writing skills, students should be guided correctly, and teachers should encourage students to write. For example:

*"My students think that I also write regularly and keep a diary. If they did not think so, they would not have done it. At this point, we need to be guides for our students."* (Banu)

*"One day, I wrote a very beautiful composition in the Turkish course. We had just survived the 1999 earthquake back then. I drafted a composition on that topic. In the class, my teacher and my classmates liked it very much. They encouraged me to keep writing. Every week, I did my essay assignment perfectly." (Esra)*

The last common sub-theme derived from the elementary school teachers' perceptions was to explain the differences between written and verbal communication. Under this sub-theme, it was seen that elementary school teachers mainly discussed the reasons for the prevalence of oral communication. According to the teachers' perceptions, oral communication included a more instant, easier, practical, widespread, personal, and passive process, compared to written communication. The teachers consider the aforementioned situations advantages using verbal communication in general. For example:

*"I certainly do not feel any pressure on me. I express my own feelings. Nobody is messing with them while I am writing. They might mess with them when evaluating, but that moment is mine, that article is mine, I am the one writing." (Esra)*

*"When we think of the writing ability as self-expression in the first place, we use verbal expression more frequently. But, as a way of expressing ourselves, we do not use the verbal skills when writing a petition, of course. We use them by writing, but it is more verbal in terms of expressing ourselves." (Banu)*

### **Differentiated discourses**

Many differentiated discourses were found describing what the teacher statements about writing and writership meant at that moment in the relevant context. One of the teachers, for example, stated that she wrote a story to cope with her boredom in her leisure time, and then she holds a passion for writing. The teacher's statement was as follows:

*"We had a higher education examination (THEE) last month. I was a proctor in the THEE exam. I thought the time was not passing. So, I got a piece of paper and a pen right away and jotted down quickly. Then, when I went home, I made a fair copy of what I wrote, and felt happy when I was writing. So, I was not worried and it was beautiful. After that, writing has become a habit like a passion." (Banu)*

As you can see, even teachers sometimes come too late to realize their interests. For this reason, it is necessary to conduct writing studies with students from early ages and draw their attention to these studies.

Amongst others, a teacher expressed that writing was a type of skill that should be taught latter than other preliminary skills. For example:

*"Yes, of course, after all, we invented writing later on. People first communicated using body language and later by talking." (Derya)*

Another noteworthy statement of the teachers was that the examination system in Turkey was not supporting the writing achievement. For example:

*"There was a test ahead of us. We answered it. It was always like this. We passed the student selection exam. We passed many tests, including the secondary education institutions student selection and placement exam. There were not many factors that would help improve writing this way." (Derya)*

Generally speaking, it was found that the teachers described writing as an important skill used in transferring of emotions and thoughts. They stated that language skills were interrelated, and one needs a set of specified toolkits to write. The teachers noted that the development of technology has been reducing the need for traditional writing, and social prejudices have diminished the willingness of participating teachers to write.

When the teachers' language use was examined, it was determined that they were mainly interested in persuading other people and emphasizing the points they liked. It was found that the teachers perceived themselves as neither very successful writer nor very unsuccessful (medium) writers in general. They stated that they were happy when writing, even if they did not like to express their feelings. The teachers stated that writing success had a profound effect on academic achievement and that the largest share in educating individuals to be good writers was in the hands of teachers. It was also expressed that in order to be a good writer, one needed to be a good observer, reader, listener, and researcher. Finally, it was stated that verbal communication was more instantaneous, common, practical, and easier than written communication.

### **Discussion**

When students are engaged in literacy activities, they do not only participate in these activities but also enter an identity creation process to become literate (Seban & Tavşanlı, 2015). Literacy practices and the context in which these practices take place are vital for students' literacy development. The most important task in achieving these practices and providing appropriate literacy experiences for students has been seen under the control and guidance of teachers (Johnston, Woodside-Jiron & Day, 2001). Therefore, teachers' literacy identities are of great importance to students' literacy development and identity building.



The findings of the study showed that the teachers defined writing as an important type of skill used to transfer feelings and thoughts. Seban and Tavşanlı (2015) reported that teachers consider the act of writing important because of the necessity to transfer ideas. Graves (1983) described writing studies as a process of developing literacy background for students and training/educating individuals who are able to express themselves better while writing. In this respect, writing is considered to be used for communication purposes more frequently.

The teachers stated that language skills should be developed interrelatedly. This common-sense reinforces a prevailing fact highlighted in the literature. This is because studies and discussions reveal that language skills are interrelated and that all language skills must be used in coordination as a requisite to the develop language skills (Graves, 1983; McCarthey, 2001; McKnight, 2010). At this point, it is an obvious fallacy to focus on a single skill only while doing literacy work with students.

Another result of the study is that the creation of a written product requires a certain set of language related skills and background knowledge. This result becomes more important when combined with the fact that language skills are interrelated. Because, in writing processes, the set of language related skills that must be possessed to create a text can be more easily obtained using reading, listening, and writing skills (Aram, 2005; Sharples, 2003). For example, as McKnight (2010) argued, the student's vocabulary knowledge should be enriched to enable them to express themselves in a better manner. It is necessary to expand the students' breadth and depth vocabulary as an important factor can improve their writing skills through reading and listening.

One of the conclusions reached in the category of figure words was that writing can be more important for teachers than people working in many other sectors. The participant teachers expressed that they use their writing competencies to conduct more effective in-class teaching, act as a social role model for writing, and improve themselves as professionals. From this perspective students' gaining self-efficacy in literacy is one of the most important steps to take, and the most serious responsibility in this regard belongs to the teachers (Margolis & McCabe, 2006). Because observation has an important role on the formation of self-efficacy (Ülper, Yaylı, & Karakaya, 2013). As Bandura (1982) mentioned performing a task successfully depends on the self-efficacy of the student. "Students who feel efficacious for learning or performing a task participate more readily, work harder, persist longer when they encounter difficulties,

and achieve at a higher level. Hence interventions designed to improve students' acquisition of literacy skills must also address their self-efficacy for learning to influence their learning and motivation" (Schunk, 2003, pp.161-162). The results of the researches show that teachers affect the literacy identities of students (Dyson, 2001; McKay & Kendrick, 2001). At this point, the role of the teacher as a role model that encourages and motivates students is essential to make the students qualified literates (Corkery, 2005).

Another point explored in this study was how cultural models reflected teachers' writership identities. It is quite clear that cultural models were associated with the use of technology and the development of technology had implications for literacy studies. The teachers stated that students were more reluctant to use new technologies in writing compared to their earlier attitudes to writing. At this point, it is thought that it will be beneficial for students to continue their writing studies without being discouraged from the ever-developing technologies. It is a fact that literacy studies have now shifted toward digital literacy, and literacy studies should be conducted with this reality in mind (Alvermann et al., 2012). Today, it is considered important to use new types of literacies emerging with the development of technology; these literacies are to follow the changing world, access the information quickly, and diversify reading resources (Burnett & Merchant, 2011).

Another point here is that social prejudice and criticism kept teachers from writing. It should be remembered that the human being is a social being and the sociocultural practices and experiences in their daily life affects a person understanding of literacy as well as his/her body and soul. The society in which the individuals live, their education, cultural values and beliefs, live conditions, and the degree of their access to technical possesses affect them in many different ways (Corkery, 2005). The findings also show that negative expectations and criticisms of people are discouraging factors for the teachers' writership.

Our time necessitate encouragement of students to continuously their writing skills and digital literacy, starting from preschool education (Bindman, Skibbe, Hindman, Aram & Morrison, 2014; McKnight, 2010). In this process, the teachers can play an important role. It is desirable that the teachers create supportive environment in which their students be encouraged and motivated through strengthening self-efficacy to create writing and develop writing skills (Corkery, 2005). At the same time, students should also be given opportunities to gain a culture of criticism and experience practices that will enable them not to be afraid of constructive criticism.

The findings also indicate the teachers' motives of languages mainly to persuade people and emphasize points that they liked.

Teachers are seen as one of the most influential factor with regard to communication in the classroom. Therefore, the quality of communication in educational environments is directly proportional to teachers' communication skills. At this point, it becomes essential for what purpose teachers use the language and how effectively they use it. Research conducted in Turkey shows that overall communication skills of teachers in educational settings are high (Çetinkaya, 2011; Yılmaz & Çimen, 2008). Our study explored that the teachers outside educational context in the schools use written language mainly to persuade and emphasize the points that they consider important.

Another point examined in the study was the teachers' situated identities about writership. The teachers consider themselves as neither very successful nor unsuccessful users of the written language in general; they instead consider themselves medium level writers. They like writing, even though they do not like to express their feelings. It is not a very positive situation for teachers to consider themselves medium-level writers. Teachers are expected to become competent and self-confident individuals with high level of 'self-efficacy' with regard to their writing skills. This is important because their thoughts, beliefs about themselves and their skills have impact on their performances as teachers and consequently for learning outcomes of their students.

Furthermore the findings of this study show that the teachers consider verbal communication more instantaneous, common, practical, and easier than written communication. It is known that writing requires the use of high-level skills cognitively and effectively. This is a challenging task and one of the explanations for why people prefer verbal communication over written communication. On the other hand, our time necessitates high-level written skills in educational and professional settings.

The findings of this study revealed that the teachers' writership identities have been shaped starting from their early experiences in the school-settings.

For this reason, it is of utmost importance for the development of the writing skills of students that we can create conditions to their continuously improvement of their writing skills along with all other language skills and their 'self-efficacy' in preschool age. At this point, teachers have a significant responsibility and opportunity.

They can create supportive and collaborative teaching-learning environment in which they can demonstrate their 'writership' as role models. By doing so, they can pave the way for their students. In collaborative and supportive educational settings it is easier to create a learning community in which the students can improve their language skills, background knowledge, vocabulary and 'self-efficacy' as the necessary foundation for their writership as 'today's students' and 'tomorrow's adults' in different sectors of the society, including 'teaching profession.

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## Appendix

### Semi-Structured Interview Form

1. What comes into your mind when you hear the term "writing"?
2. When do you need to use your writing skills?
3. What do you think about the place of writing skills in our lives if you compare it with other language skills we have?
4. Is it important for you to be able to write good? How does one's ability to write good or bad influence his or her life?
5. Would you describe someone with good writing skills?
6. How do you see yourself as a writer? (adequate, i.e. successful; medium-level; inadequate, i.e. unsuccessful). What is the reason for this, and why do you see yourself as a ... writer?
7. Would you share your experiences and knowledge about writing?
8. Do you write about any topic?
9. What are your feelings about writing? How do you feel when you are writing?
10. What do you think about sharing what you write? (Do you share your writings, or just write for yourself).
11. What do you do as a teacher to improve the writing skills of students?
12. Would you please talk about what you do to help students love writing and make it an activity that they can love doing in their lives?
13. Are there any additional activities that you do besides the activities in the curriculum so that your students are active in writing and sufficient in written expression? Would you please talk about these?
14. Is there anything else you want to add about writing and seeing yourself as a writer?