A CASE STUDY ON THE EVALUATION OF WRITING SKILL IN TEACHING TURKISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

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Abstract

It is important that exams are scored and evaluated correctly in the writing skills. Even if the validity and reliability of the prepared exam is high, the error in the evaluation will reduce the validity and reliability of an exam. Therefore, it is an issue that we should focus on measuring and evaluating in writing skills. The fact that the measurement part is supported by various studies but there are deficiencies in the evaluation part raises the problem of evaluating the ability to write. Hence, making accurate assessments will make the process more objective and efficient if the student receives the feedback of the mistakes, they have made and the teachers have standard criteria to assist them during the evaluation phase. There are varieties of measurements often used in education to measure student success such as written exams, multiple choice exams, and so on. These exams are not about the processes of students, but about the results of the exams. Rubrics are one of the most common and powerful measuring tools used in assessment. In this study, it has been tried to determine how writing skills are evaluated in TÖMERs, which are stated in the limitations in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners, how the measurement and evaluation processes progress, whether or not the evaluations differ from institution to institution, and within this framework, it has been tried to analyze whether a standard rubric for writing skills is necessary or not. As a result, the deficiencies in the evaluation of writing skills were determined and it was concluded that a standard rubric was required.

Keywords: Writing, rubric, rating scale, assessment, evaluation

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1. Introduction

Language is the most powerful tool for communication between people. Language and language education is very important in the formation of the culture of a society and in the process of belonging to the society of an individual who belongs to a culture or wants to adapt to that culture. Man, who is a social creature by nature, has tried and is trying to provide this socialization through various communication ways in his relations with each other throughout the ages. Do not write; It is an indispensable tool in shaping civilizations, in intercultural transfers and in the transmission of ideas. Writing is used at every stage of the education-teaching process.

One of the skills in teaching Turkish as a foreign language, which is based on the acquisition of language skills and the application of acquired skills, is writing skill. "Among these skills, it is extremely important to consider and develop the writing skill. Because it is a known fact that foreign students' writing skills affect their success, especially in university education "(Büyükikiz, 2012:71). When evaluated from this point of view, the fact that the lack of writing skills in written language proficiency exams leads to failure in other areas (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2011) is an important issue that necessitates the development of writing skills in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language.

"Due to Turkey's location, the need to teach Turkish to foreigners is increasing day by day. Today, this need has become more evident both for foreigners in Turkey and for foreigners who want to learn Turkish outside of Turkey. For this reason, the subject of teaching Turkish to foreigners is a subject that should be emphasized. For this, significant research and studies should be carried out on teaching Turkish as a foreign language" (Göçer & Mongol 2011:808).

Man has needed to communicate in every moment of his life. This need has revealed the necessity of using writing skills as well as speaking skills. Barın (2009: 21) states that the reason why the writing skill is more complex than other skills is that "the writer knows which words to express the message, how to organize the sentence and how to write in accordance with the spelling rules so that the message he gives in writing is understood correctly and completely by the reader". stressed its necessity. These requirements complicate writing skill and teaching writing skill. In order to minimize these complexities and make the process easier, measurement and evaluation should be given great importance.

As in education and training, the aim is to reach the goal in the field of teaching Turkish as a foreign language. The quality of the education given in this process, the competence of the teachers, the environment in which the education and training will be given are of great importance, as well as one of the main parts of this process in measurement and evaluation. For this reason, measurement and evaluation should be studied in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. The aim is to make effective and accurate measurements of student achievement.

Measurement and evaluation are used to determine the development of students and to determine whether the targeted gains are realized in the education process. Measurement and evaluation, which is important in every field of education, also has a great importance in language teaching. When we go from general to specific, the measurement and evaluation problem in teaching Turkish as a foreign language is a known reality.

Boylu (2019), in the preface of his book Assessment and Evaluation in Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language from Theory to Practice; Certification with arbitrary practices in TÖMERs, the inability to make healthy assessment and evaluation practices in textbooks, the fact that measurement and evaluation is result-oriented only with the course exams at the end of the process, many teachers working in the field prepare questions without considering any criteria, writing and speaking skills are not tested with scales by teachers. not arbitrary (based on experience) evaluation, has shown reasons such as.

It is more difficult to eliminate the deficiencies of the students who learn Turkish as a foreign language during their education than those who receive education in their mother tongue. For this reason, healthy and effective measurements should be made. Teaching Turkish as a foreign language takes place around four skills: reading, writing, listening and speaking. In addition to providing the four skills, it is also important to measure and evaluate whether the achievements specified in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages have been achieved. One of the most important reasons for the measurement and evaluation problem is the lack of common standards in the measurement and evaluation of these skills. Although there were problems in the measurement and evaluation of all four skills, it was determined that one of the most important problems was in the writing skill. Evaluating and gaining writing skills is a skill that is very difficult in teaching Turkish as a foreign language as well as in mother tongue education. The fact that the student has difficulty in transferring what he thinks to writing reduces the motivation of the students. However, problems such as not making correct determinations and feedback in the measurement of the acquired skills, not being able to get feedback on where the student made a mistake, or taking it incompletely affected the student's attitude towards this skill and difficulties were experienced during the writing education due to the negative attitude developed towards the skill. It is more difficult to acquire and evaluate the writing skill compared to other skills in this respect.

In order to minimize these difficulties, the European Common Recommendations Framework should ensure that curriculums, program guidelines, exams and textbooks, etc., for target languages in European countries. forms the basis for its preparation. It comprehensively describes what language learners need to do and learn to meet their communicative needs in this language, and what knowledge and competences they need to develop in order to be communicatively successful. These definitions also include the cultural dimension of that language. The Recommendations Framework also defines "the proficiency levels required to

measure the language learner's achievements throughout life and at each stage of the learning process" (TELC, 2013:11). In teaching Turkish as a foreign language, the curricula, exams, textbooks, materials are carried out taking into account the criteria in the European Common Recommendations Framework. This is important in terms of catching certain and valid standards in language teaching. The preparation of a comprehensive, transparent and coherent Framework of Recommendations for language learning and teaching does not mean accepting a uniform order for all. On the contrary, the Framework of Recommendations needs to be open and flexible so that it can be used in any situation and make necessary adjustments. (TELC, 2013: 16). The European Common Recommendations Framework defines itself as a measurement and evaluation tool.

There are measurement types that are frequently used in education to measure student achievement. Written exams, multiple choice exams etc. these exams deal with the results of the exams, not the processes of the students. With the changing understanding of education, besides the product, alternative evaluation methods of the importance of evaluation in the process are presented to us. Büyüköztürk (2007) described one of these evaluations as performance evaluation and expresses performance evaluation as an evaluation made with tools with high reliability and validity.

In addition to the accuracy and reliability of the assessment tools, it is also important that the exams are scored and evaluated correctly. Even if the validity and reliability of the prepared exam is high, errors in the evaluation will reduce the validity and reliability of the exam. Boylu (2019) multiple choice, true-false, yes-no etc. He stated that while the tests are difficult to prepare and easy to score, it is very difficult to score the writing and speaking exams easily. The reason for this is that there are no scoring keys that specify clear criteria in the scoring of the writing and speaking exams. Scoring for writing exams varies according to institutions, schools and courses. Some of these ratings are tried to be explained below.

The scoring format that the teacher scores according to their experience and experience is the scores given by the teachers working in this field without using general criteria. This scoring affects the correct evaluation of the exam. In this type of scoring, the necessity of evaluating at least two people who work in the paper field has been stated in the studies conducted in the field. Özçelik (1992) stated that a teacher gave a different score when he scored a paper again at another time, or a different score was given when a different teacher scored the same paper, and there was no consistency between these scores.

"Another point that creates a disadvantage for students in traditional assessment and evaluation approaches is that students do not have enough information about what is expected of them" (Korkmaz, 2009: 4).

Using a rubric is another way to score writing skills. This method is the most reliable form of scoring written expression papers. Because in this method, the rater knows according to which criteria to score the student's paper, and this increases the reliability of scoring. Because, it was determined in advance according to which criteria the points to be given to the

students' writing papers would be given (Boylu, 2019). Moskal and Leydens (2000) underlined that with rubrics, it is possible to determine in more detail what deficiencies the students will have at which level.

In their article, Parlak and Doğan (2014) stated that the rubrics' structure consisting of criteria and performance levels minimizes the biases that may occur during scoring, thus providing students with more realistic and detailed feedback about their performance. Rubrics, also known as rubrics, are powerful tools for measurement and evaluation. Rubrics allow students to self-assess. "While the rubrics guide the students about the work to be done, they will enable them to realize their weaknesses and show them concrete ways to improve their deficiencies" (Korkmaz, 2009, :23).

Rubrics are of great benefit to teachers and the assessment and evaluation process as well as to students. The most important of these benefits is that the instructors behave more objectively when evaluating the student's work, and have knowledge about the progress of the students and the areas that need improvement (Korkmaz, 2009). In addition to these, the use of rubrics reduces the time in the evaluation process and provides standardized evaluations. For this reason, the evaluation process of writing skill is of great importance.

The aim of this study is to determine how writing skills are evaluated in TÖMERs specified in the field of study in teaching Turkish as a language to foreigners, how the assessment and evaluation processes progress, whether the evaluations differ from institution to institution, and the necessity of a standard rubric for writing skills in this framework is discussed.

In line with the main purpose of the research, the question "How is the writing skill evaluated in teaching Turkish as a foreign language and is there a need for a rubric in evaluations?" The following questions were tried to be answered within the framework of the main problem:

1. How is writing skill evaluated in teaching Turkish as a language to foreigners?

2. Does the evaluation of writing skills in exams differ according to TÖMERs?

3. Is there a need for a standard rubric in the assessment and evaluation of writing skills in teaching Turkish as a language to foreigners?

2. Method

In this section, information such as the research model, data collection process, data collection tools, applications, and data analysis are given.

2.1. Model of the research

This research is an experimental study based on qualitative data. In this study, primarily, a literature review was conducted on writing skills in teaching Turkish to foreigners. The existing studies and documents in the field were examined. Then, within the framework of the question of how the writing exams are evaluated in TÖMER and Language Centers, some TÖMERs were contacted and data and documents were collected, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with authorized persons working in the relevant institutions.

2.1.1. Working group

Turkish teachers working in Ankara TÖMER, Gazi TÖMER, Hacettepe TÖMER and BÜ-DEM participated in the research. Turkish teachers were interviewed and information was obtained about the process they had in evaluating writing skills. The rubrics of the centers where rubrics were used were taken and examined. The reason why the study was limited to the institutions mentioned above is that the children of the institutions are closed due to the Covid-19 epidemic and transportation problems are experienced.

2.1.2. Data Collection and Analysis

TÖMERs and Turkish teachers working in TÖMERs were contacted and information was obtained about how they evaluated their writing skills. In the light of this information, the collected data and scoring keys were examined and errors and deficiencies were analyzed. Document review does not mean doing a general literature review. Document review refers to both a data collection method and a form of analysis (Özkan, 2019). In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the instructors in the relevant institutions and the analyzes were detailed. Qualitative data obtained from semi-structured interviews were recorded and the interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Fixed themes were found by content analysis and thematic analysis was made. Transcripts were read by the researcher to categorize the data to be placed into relevant groups for better analysis, and intercoder reliability was checked.

2.4. Measuring Tools

In this study, primarily, a literature review was conducted on writing skills in teaching Turkish to foreigners. The existing studies and documents in the field were examined. Then, within the framework of the question of how the writing exams are evaluated in TÖMER and Language Centers, some TÖMERs were contacted and data and documents were collected, and semi-structured interviews were conducted with authorized persons working in the

relevant institutions. A semi-structured interview was conducted by contacting a total of 10 instructors in TÖMERs, which are stated in the limitations of the research. An interview form with 9 questions consisting of the following items was applied to the instructors.

Table 1. Interview questions and number of respondents

Questions	Number of people responding
1. What do you think about the scoring of the writing exams in the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners?	9
2. How are the writing exams scored in your institution?	10
3. What difficulties do you have in scoring the writing exams?	10
4. . Do you use a standard rubric or a scale when scoring the writing tests?	10
5. How many evaluators evaluate the writing exams in your institution?	10
6. Do you think that writing exams are evaluated objectively in teaching Turkish to foreigners?	8
7. What are your recommendations for the evaluation of writing exams?	7
8. Do you think that a rubric that can be used while scoring the writing exams will make your job easier?	10
9. What do you think about the deficiencies in evaluating the writing exams?	7

3. Findings and Discussion

A semi-structured interview was conducted by contacting a total of 10 instructors in TÖMERs, which are stated in the limitations of the research. According to Table 1 below, 2.3.4.5.8. All participants answered the questions. In total, 81 responses were received from the participants.

In response to question 3, the participants; They stated that they did not use a specific scale when making their assessments, and that they made an assessment based on their experience.

In response to question 5, the participants;

       a.   Some participants stated that two evaluators scored the exams at the institutions.

    b. Some participants stated that only one evaluator scored.

In response to question 6, the participants;

    a. Evaluators evaluate their own classes,

    b. He stated that although there were rubrics, the evaluators did not use them and individual evaluations were made.

To the 8th question, the participants stated that there are some rubrics but they are not understandable.

3.1. Findings and comments on sub-problems

The findings obtained as a result of the data collected from the instructors participating in the study were interpreted according to the sub-problems of the study, taking into account the table.

Results of Teacher Interviews

In this section, the results of the interviews with the teachers will be discussed. A semi-structured interview was conducted by contacting a total of 10 instructors in TÖMERs, which are stated in the limitations of the research. According to Table 1 below, 2.3.4.5.8. All participants answered the questions. In total, 81 responses were received from the participants.

The results of the data collected and analyzed will be presented in this section to answer three of the research questions. By analyzing the data obtained from the interviews, the study hopes to learn how and with which scoring tools the writing skill is evaluated in teaching Turkish as a foreign language, and what the teachers' perceptions are on this subject. The interviews with the teachers were analyzed qualitatively by categorizing them around the research questions. Categories are large units of information containing many codes of common ideas. These can be thought of as basic patterns, findings or abstractions that emerge in response to research questions. (Çelik, Baykal & Officer, 2020)

Research Question 1: How is writing skill evaluated in teaching Turkish as a foreign language?

2.4.5 given in table 1 around the question of how teachers' writing skills are evaluated in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. According to the answers given to the questions, the most recurring theme was that there were some deficiencies in the measurement and evaluation of the writing skill, that the teachers who evaluated the writing skill did not use a specific scale when evaluating the writing skills, and they made assessments based on their experiences.

One teacher said:

> "We evaluate the writing exams in the institution in such a way that each teacher scores their own class, I think this is not objective, but since there is no regulation about this, we read the papers of our own classes ourselves" (T1)

Another teacher said:

> "I don't use any scales when scoring exams, but I take into account my own experience and scoring guidelines from some sources." (T4)

Another teacher mentioned the issue as follows:

> "When we evaluate the exams, we evaluate as a single teacher, each teacher evaluates the writing papers of his class." (S7)

The necessity of making the assessments by at least two teachers who are experts in their fields is also stated in the studies conducted by Özçelik (1992), Boylu (2019) and Gedik (2017).

The findings of the interview results regarding how the teachers' writing skills are evaluated in teaching Turkish as a foreign language and what they think about the scoring of the exams are presented below.

When the teachers were asked what they thought about the scoring of the writing tests, the most recurring theme was that the objectivity of the scoring was low. All the teachers who answered the question stated that the lack of standards in the scoring of the writing skills kept the teachers away from objective evaluations while scoring, and as a result of this, they stated that the scores corresponding to the beginning-intermediate-good levels of the institutions varied.

One teacher said:

> "The fact that we do not have certain standards when scoring the writing exams negatively affects the reliability of the process and afterwards in scoring the exams, the student's desire to see his mistakes and the lack of consistent explanations for what and how much points are given greatly affects the reliability of the institution and the teacher." (T3)

Another teacher stated the following.

> "I think that writing skill is a skill that tends to be incomplete, so I think that its measurement and evaluation should be done meticulously. Although there are no concrete studies on the evaluation of writing skills, most institutions will now start to form an assessment and evaluation unit and contribute to assessment and evaluation in teaching Turkish as a foreign language. started to take steps for it" (T5)

Research question 2: Does the evaluation of writing skills in exams differ according to TÖMERs?

Evaluating the writing skill with reliable and valid measurement tools is a subject that should be emphasized. Students' motivation to write and to reach correct information should save Turkish from the belief that writing skills are difficult. For this reason, having certain standards and evaluations according to these standards will be more advantageous and useful for both students and teachers. Considering these, the researcher tried to find out whether the evaluations differed according to TÖMERs. The results show that in some of the institutions, at least two teachers evaluate the writing skill, while in others, the assessments are made by a single evaluator, the instructors evaluate their own classes, a common scoring key is not used, the rubric and assessment forms are not sufficiently understandable, the rubrics are not used even though they exist in some institutions, the exams are not suitable for the individual assessments of the teachers. reveals that it was abandoned.

One teacher said:

> "There is a rubric for assessing the writing exam at the institution I work for, but I don't use it because I think it will take my time. I myself evaluate faster" (T4)

Another teacher expressed her thoughts as follows:

> There are rubrics belonging to our institution, I shared them with you, but they are not very understandable, there are many missing places, I especially see the rubrics that do not explain what the achievements correspond to as a waste of time "(T9)

Another teacher said, "Do you think that writing exams are evaluated objectively in teaching Turkish to foreigners?" He answered the question as follows.

> "I don't think that writing exams are evaluated objectively, but I work very hard and there are too many classes, so I make quick and single-rater assessments. (T5)

Research question 3: Is there a need for a standard rubric in assessment and evaluation of writing skills in teaching Turkish as a foreign language?

The answers received from the teachers during the interviews are among the results of the study that they need the existence of a standard rubric because the absence of a standard rubric will minimize the confusion in the scoring and provide objectivity in the writing scoring.

While all of the interviewed teachers stated that there was a need for a standard rubric, they also underlined that the rubric should be useful.

The intensity of the teachers, the large number of students and classes, and the lack of experts in the field were shown as the reason for the question "why not use rubrics" during the study. Gedik (2009) points out in his thesis on measurement and evaluation in teaching Turkish to foreigners that the evaluators who will read the writing paper must be given a scoring chart as the main point to be considered while evaluating the writing skill.

One teacher said:

I get help from the rubrics used in English while scoring the writing exams, I think that systematic studies in English should also be done in teaching Turkish to foreigners, the formation and implementation of standards will contribute to Turkish education" (T1)

Another teacher stated:

"Having a useful and time-saving scoring scale will be more advantageous for both teachers and institutions" (S9)

"There are many scales under development, I think there is a need for a scale in the field of writing skills as well." (T4)

In teacher interviews, "What are your recommendations for the evaluation of writing exams?" The recommendations given in response to the question are mentioned below.

One teacher said:

"At least two teachers should evaluate the writing exams, and the teachers who evaluate the exam should not be the teachers of the class. I think that objectivity can be achieved more in this way "(T1)

Another teacher stated:

"Measurement and evaluation units should definitely be established in TÖMERs. Examinations should be read by the teachers working in these units, so that the teachers will not evaluate their own classes and will save time." (T3)

Another teacher said:

"It would be good to score the writing exams with a standard rubric, but we have seen that online exams and tests are very practical and useful during the current pandemic period. These rubrics can be transferred to online environments to facilitate the work of teachers. Thus, it can be easier to read and score" (T8)

4. Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations

According to the findings obtained from the findings of the study; It has been determined that there are some deficiencies in the measurement and evaluation of writing skills in TÖMERs, that the instructors who evaluate writing skills do not use a specific scale when evaluating writing skills, they make evaluations based on their experiences. In some institutions, at least two teachers evaluate the writing skill, while in others, evaluations are made by a single evaluator, the instructors evaluate their own classes, a common scoring key is not used, rubrics and evaluation forms are not sufficiently understandable, rubrics are not used even though they exist in some institutions, and exams are left to the individual evaluations of the instructors, are among the results of this study. Boylu (2019) examined teachers' consistency in scoring in his doctoral thesis. In the study, "60 teachers with at least 2

years of experience in the relevant field were sent a written expression sheet of a student and the teachers were asked to score the paper over 25 points and determine the level of the student without using any scoring key." In the conclusion part, 60 teachers gave points from 22 to 8 points and determined their levels in the range of A1-C1. Evidence of inconsistencies in this study confirms the findings of this study.

These results reveal that there are no healthy evaluations in writing skills in Turkish Teaching Centers. As Boylu (2019) stated in his doctoral thesis, unless the validity and reliability of the exams are supported by the reliability of the scoring, the measurements and evaluations will be erroneous and invalid.

"Assessments in which instructors evaluate their own classes and use a single evaluator pose serious problems for reliability. One of the best methods to minimize the non-objective evaluation of teachers towards their own students, especially in the course exams, is to take the exam by other teachers, not the teacher taking the class. Thus, a more objective scoring and evaluation can be made" (Boylu, 2019:115).

Some of the institutions have their own rubrics. These rubrics are included in the appendix. One of the information obtained as a result of the study is that although these rubrics exist, they are not used to evaluate writing skills. Although it is a rubric, evaluations are left to the experience and individual evaluation of the evaluators. Since these rubrics are used only in a specific exam, they do not provide general validity. Rubrics are inadequate in several ways. These inadequacies create reliability problems in the evaluation of writing skills. As a result of Boylu's (2019) study, it shows us that the consistency of measuring and evaluating the writing skills of Turkish teachers is not at the desired level, and that there are deficiencies in the measurement and evaluation of writing skills in Turkish education for foreigners.

"A national framework should be established, especially in proficiency exams, and the exams should be made accordingly and the results should be evaluated accordingly" (Gedik, 2017: 129). The intensity of the teachers, the large number of students and classes, and the lack of experts in the field were shown as the reason for the question "why not use rubrics" during the study. These reasons are generally proof of the necessity of measurement and evaluation units in TÖMERs. However, this requirement has started to be noticed by some institutions and one of the institutions started to work on measurement and evaluation by creating R&D units in 2019. The results of this research prove the necessity of analytical rubrics in order to make accurate and healthy measurements while evaluating writing skills in teaching Turkish to foreigners. There is a need for analytical rubrics for writing skills with validity and reliability (Boylu, 2019:332). Considering the reasons mentioned in the study, a rubric should be developed to evaluate writing skills in teaching Turkish as a foreign language, according to the levels or to create a general standard.

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