



A COMPOSITION FOCUSED ANALYSIS OF THE SECONDARY SCHOOL ENGLISH CURRICULUM IN TURKEY

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Abstract

Secondary education is a major and defining period by design with the Turkish educational system. What happens during this crucial time of the study, and particularly on the college entrance exam, often dictates a student's trajectory from that point forward as far as higher education is concerned. Composition education in Turkey takes place within the wider conversation of English language competency and literacy, just as it would in any other non-native environment. More specifically, this is because composition must be taught in a L2 (second language) and EFL context. To date, whilst there has been a great deal of study relating to different aspects of English education in Turkey at the K-12 and university levels, there is a lack of studies focusing on composition education. This study seeks to address that and conducts a composition focused analysis of the Turkish National English Curriculum, through the usage of a case study methodology. In conclusion, it was found that the curriculum does allow for a multitude of competency development opportunities. However, there is a general gap of scholarship within the area of secondary school composition education generally in Turkey, which is an area of further exploration.

Keywords: ELT; Turkey; International Composition; Rhetoric; Secondary School

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1. Introduction

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Secondary education is a major and defining period by design with the Turkish educational system. What happens during this crucial time of the study, and particularly on the college

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entrance exam often dictates a student's trajectory from that point forward as far as higher education is concerned. For students who are not able to get into universities due to the limited supply of university spaces, secondary school concludes their formal education unless they can manage to retake the exam and score higher in succeeding years. Whatever the case is, to understand what type of composition success at the tertiary education level within the nation, we need to first understand what type of knowledge, experience, and training in composition that secondary school students in Turkey arrive with.

Composition education in Turkey takes place within the wider conversation of English language competency and literacy, just as it would in any other non-native environment. More specifically, this is because composition must be taught in a L2 (second language) and EFL context. That is already one of the clear distinctions it has from composition education like that in the US, where writing is the bread and butter of such a course. In many universities, for example, for those students wishing to study in English medium programs (or in universities that are fully instructed in English), a "preparatory year" is often a requirement where building academic English competencies is crucial. In this endeavor, writing is theoretically a major part of the curriculum. These preparatory year programs are often offered through a Department of Foreign Languages, which "have mostly been inspired by writing and reading integrity and this has been put into effect in the language curriculum" (Ata & Erturk, 2019, p. 73).

To understand composition, we must first begin with the acknowledgement of the fact that is central to composition and writing education at any level within Turkey. Composition is not taught outside of a TESOL context. ESL is the first aim of English education at the schooling level from when it starts as a required course (Grade 4+) in Turkey, and this remains true even as students advance through grades into high school. Compared to other (mostly native) countries where English competency at this level is often taught through English literature courses (as almost every American high school graduate would have experienced), such instruction is simply not possible in Turkey, and even if so, possesses many problems (Isikli & Tarakcioglu, 2017). The reason for this is that students at the high school level, like those in university, have an extremely low English proficiency (Isikli & Tarakcioglu, 2017, p. 93). This level, analyzed to be at elementary proficiency levels, is far too low for any meaningful prose to be written.

For the purpose of this study, secondary education will be looked at in particular due to its high level of relevance for composition education at the university level, although it should be noted that the English educational curriculum from the primary school level takes place as early as Grade 4. To date, whilst there has been a great deal of study relating to different aspects of English education in Turkey at the K-12 and university level (for example, a search on the Turkish Council of Higher Education thesis database for the keyword "ELT" yielded 291 records) there hasn't been many studies to do with just composition education. Similarly, there is a disconnect as far as national work in the U.S. is concerned (Rhetoric & Composition

as a discipline is very much something that is unique to the country). Indeed, “U.S. composition studies have paid little attention to insights that might emerge from cross-national comparisons of writing development and pedagogy, given that general college composition courses largely do not exist outside the United States” (Russell & Foster, 2017, p. 3).

For this reason, I firmly believe that there is a tremendous need for such a study. This will contribute to the literature in questions considered increasingly important by composition scholarship, including those on global composition education and its influences and non-native countries’ composition education frameworks (in this case Turkey). Additionally, this research aims to engage with the field of secondary level education, something that is sometimes disconnected from the wider picture despite its direct relationship with tertiary level composition studies.

1.2. Relevant scholarship

Composition, due to its variation across contexts, cannot be defined or summarized in any quick and encompassing manner. Rather, it is an amalgamation of many forms of practice and ideologies that ultimately inform the discipline. According to *A guide to composition pedagogies*, written by practitioners and scholars of the field seeking to define it, “Composition pedagogy is a body of knowledge consisting of theories of and research on teaching, learning, literacy, writing, and rhetoric, and the related practices that emerge. It is the deliberate integration of theory, research, personal philosophy, and rhetorical praxis into composition instruction at all levels from the daily lesson plan to the writing program and the communities it serves.” (Hessler et al., 2014, p. 3). Indeed, as the authors say “Composition pedagogy is an umbrella term like theory, rhetoric, or literacy; it contains much that is worthy of extensive scholarly and practitioner attention, and the more deeply we engage it, the more complex and diverse it becomes-which is why composition pedagogy morphs into composition pedagogies just as literacy becomes literacies” (Hessler et al., 2014, p. 3). In the field’s diversity then, lies its importance for instruction. It engages not just writing, but critical thinking, analysis, and engagement. More so than that, it not only morphs into the different disciplines but is a centerpiece in all of them.

Composition education is actually broader than that. In its study, constraining it to a singular context is a fruitless exercise. As it varies between institutions, it also varies in many more ways. Between geographies, non-native versus native environments, students, and even between the individual teacher. More so than that, it is not something that is constrained to any particular level of educational level (despite the fact that it is generally practiced with the aim of preparing students for further tertiary studies), because as is obvious, the phase of university education is just a part amongst many within an individual’s educational journey. In that sense, students’ primary and especially secondary educational experiences play a big role in composition educational practice. As is the case, composition education came out of the idea

that students coming into universities just couldn't perform at the expected level. That then was a direct response to the inadequacy of earlier (and particularly secondary level) education.

The rhetorical scholar Robert Connors writes about the American roots of composition education given that the Freshman English class was first mandated at Harvard University in 1874 (Connors, 1991, p. 66). This innovation was a direct response to its entering students being seen as deeply inadequate on its first written entrance exams (Connors, 1991, p. 66). By 1885, a freshman course was offered at the basic level, and by 1880, this had become a mandatory feature of a Harvard education (Connors, 1991, p. 66). With Harvard occupying the place of an educational model for institutions in general, this eventually became a standard across American universities.

The evolution of composition education from this period onwards is an area of deep scholarly exploration that has been studied extensively by scholars such as Albert Kitzhaber, Robert Connors, Sharon Crowley, James Berlin, and John Brereton. Whilst that is a lengthy discussion, it should be noted that within the next century, composition education had evolved into a widespread, formal, and scholarly area of study in and of itself. In analyzing the study "Where Did Composition Studies Come From? An Intellectual History", by the scholars Martin Nystrand, Stuart Greene, and Jeffrey Wiemelt, what can be learnt is that the post-1970 period became a defining moment for modern composition studies in the US. This was due to the emergence of "coherent research programs" that unified empirical methods and theoretical conceptions, a community of writing research, doctoral programs in rhetoric and composition at various universities including Carnegie Mellon, Purdue, and the University of Illinois at Chicago, refereed journals relating to writing education, and even a Special Interest Group (SIG) dedicated to writing research (Nystrand et al., 1993, p. 3). Additionally, post this period, significant approaches to writing emerged that were refined by some of the great American composition scholars, such as the process approach, which emphasized writing planning (Kruse, 2013, p. 39) and the Writing-in-the-Disciplines (WID) tradition, that based writing education as a "means of integration into and specialization in their fields of study" (Kruse, 2013, p. 39).

American composition scholars tend to think about writing instruction in a US-centric way, mistaking their history of composition with what writing instruction is, but writing instruction happens in many different parts of the world and American scholars can learn a great deal about writing studies from how writing is taught elsewhere. Often, composition scholars are so engaged in the national discourse that the focus on the international component is limited. And even when discussing international contexts, this internal bias remains. Indeed, in the U.S., "the attention to internationalization and its relatives, globalization and cross-cultural comparison, has tended so far to focus on the increasingly global nature of U.S. classrooms and U.S. students or students attending U.S. universities" (Donahue, 2009, p. 213). And, as Donahue speaks about, with regard to international writing research which is ever present, still, "...most U.S. teachers and scholars have not considered in contexts outside of

U.S. borders: what the teaching of academic writing might look like elsewhere, its forms, its teachers” (Donahue, 2009, p. 221). This relates to identity, a major area of study in composition studies today (one of the seminal pedagogical texts in the field, *Naming What We Know: Threshold Concepts of Writing Studies* dedicates significant time to this discussion).

In the famous text on writing studies *Naming what we know: threshold concepts of writing studies*, Tony Scott speaks of this, mentioning something that is perhaps obvious, but ironically, can be often overlooked. That is, because by nature, “writing is always ideological because discourses and instances of language use do not exist independently from cultures and their ideologies” (Scott, 2015, p. 48). It is far too easy to, whilst making associations of cross-cultural movement (as we direct focus towards an international context), forget the fact that very naturally, composition related research and engagement is a response to its surroundings. On top of that, this corresponds with the fact that the majority of scholars in the field write solely for their own surroundings. Fortunately, with this realization, it has been observed that “work in rhetoric and composition, a field once thought to have relatively little influence outside its own sphere, is increasingly cited in the work of non-US writing researchers and integrated into internationalization projects” (Heilker & Vandenberg, 2015, p. xiii). In other words, there has been an emergence of international scholars taking U.S. centric work and contextualizing it.

Writing instruction at the university level is part of a continuum, of which a significant part is the secondary school phase. In the text *Writing and Learning in Cross-National Perspective: Transitions from Secondary to Higher Education*, Russel and Foster speak this in a very detailed manner, with case studies from around the world. As they mention, “In most national education systems, students' writing development plays an important though often unacknowledged role in the crucial transition from secondary school to university” (Russell & Foster, 2017, p. 1). The writing curriculum that is now FYC (First-Year Composition) at the university level in the U.S. has its origins in being designed as a remedy for what was considered lacking from this formative period of study.

The compilation of essays, *Teaching Writing in High School and College: Conversations and Collaborations* sheds views on the relationship between the high school and college writing classroom, student, instructor, and task and is written by various practitioners regarding the topic. The work is invaluable because it addresses a common misconception in university academic writing studies generally, and that is, that there is a significant line between high school and college writing, be it in standards, instruction, or importance. In an essay written by four teaching professionals within the text (two at the university, and two at the high school level), *What We Talk about When We Talk about College Writing*, these similarities between the secondary and university level are discussed. According to the educators, there isn't much of a difference between the secondary school senior and the college freshman. There are only two and a half months between these phases,

and as much as their designation has changed, they are (obviously) very much the same people (Budden et al., 2002, p. 74).

1.3. Research questions

In the preceding sections, a theoretical basis for the study was presented. This leads to the question of this research study, how does (English) composition education look like at the secondary level in Turkey? This question has repercussions for understanding composition education in the nation, as well as in the understanding of cross-national contexts for composition scholarship in general.

2. Method

Here, I will elaborate on the particular research methods in question that will guide this study. To center the conversation, I call upon the renowned text by John W. Creswell and J. David Creswell “*Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*,” a text used extensively in my own graduate studies on research methods. As the authors mention “Research approaches are plans and the procedures for research that span the steps from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection, analysis, and interpretation” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 3). In this procedure then, lies great decision associated with the responsibility, in order to guide the study, and accommodate its limitations and constraints, in the most effective way possible. These, as the text speaks about, are based on the philosophical assumptions of the researcher, the “procedures of inquiry” (research designs) and ultimately, research methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 3).

As for approaches, this study used a qualitative approach, in this case, “data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes”, and from there, with myself “making interpretations” of subsequent meanings (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). As a form of inquiry, qualitative research “honors an inductive style, a focus on individual meaning, and the importance of reporting the complexity of a situation” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 4). All of these components are present here. Trochim expounds on inductive reasoning, as the scenario where “we begin with specific observations and measures, begin to detect patterns and regularities, formulate some tentative hypotheses that we can explore, and finally end up developing some general conclusions or theories” (Trochim, 2020). This type of reasoning, by nature, “is more open-ended and exploratory” (Trochim, 2020).

Next, I focus on research design, which essentially lies within the realm of the given method (in our case, qualitative research). “Research designs are types of inquiry” that “provide specific direction for procedures in a research study” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 11). Qualitative research has a number of associated designs, but of interest here would be the “case study”, which, are classed by Janice Lauer and J. William Asher as “qualitative descriptive research” (Lauer & Asher, 1988, p. 23). The case study, then, is the process of

“closely studying individuals, small groups, or whole environments”, to “help the researcher to identify new variables and questions for further research” (Lauer & Asher, 1988, p. 23). In the case of this study, these entities, especially of that of the “whole environment” will be observed based on primary documents pertaining to writing education in Turkey. Generally, the data sources of a case study are “quite extensive”, and they can include “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts” (Yin, 2003, p. 85). But, they can even stretch to films, photographs, street ethnography, and life history (Yin, 2003, p. 85). In the case of this study, this data source is the secondary school curricula released by the MEB.

Case studies have different types, and one of those, is the “instrumental” case study, a term coined by Robert E. Stake, and that seems more or less appropriate to this study. An instrumental case study “is not undertaken primarily because the case represents other cases or because it illustrates a particular trait or problem, but because in all its particularity and ordinariness, the case itself is of interest” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 549). Over here, this is precisely the case, as we observe composition education in Turkey. The analysis from this case study falls with Yin’s categories of such, particularly, in “pattern matching” and “explanation building”, which will be done as the various cases are assessed. Here, I will look for patterns in composition within the secondary school system in Turkey and focus on trying to provide explanations for any observed phenomena. From there, the reporting of this case study lies in my responsibility, as the researcher, to “convert a complex phenomenon into a format that is readily understood by the reader” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 555).

3. Results

With our methods in mind, I begin by firstly analyzing the National Curriculum with regard to how much composition is designed to be taught within it, and more so, to see what types of writing education broadly high school students are getting within the nation. The next section of this Chapter then will be dedicated to doing this through an analysis of the said curriculum, through examination of the official document relating to it released by the Turkish Ministry of Education, titled *İngilizce Dersi Öğretim Program* (English Course Curriculum), for grades 9-12. As the curriculum is a general curriculum, it reflects the theoretical standard across all schools and thus is crucial for this study.

Table 1. Model English Language (9-12th grades) Curriculum (from Millî Eğitim Bakanlığı 7)

Grades (CEFR*) Hours per Week	Learner Age	Skill/Grammar/Vocabulary/Pronunciation Focus	Main Activities (Can be used in all grades)
9 (A1/A2) 4	14-14.5	All four skills integrated with an emphasis on Listening and Speaking. Maximum seven new Vocabulary items per lesson. Limited Pronunciation practice	Roleplays/Simulations Graphics/Charts Paragraph Reading and Writing
10 (A2+/B1) 4	15-15.5	All four skills integrated with an emphasis on Listening and Speaking. Limited focus on Language Structures. Maximum seven new Vocabulary items per lesson. Limited Pronunciation practice.	Information Gap Activities/Roleplays Paragraph Reading and Writing Skimming and Scanning
11 (B1+/B2) 4	16-16.5	All four skills integrated with an emphasis on Listening and Speaking. Limited focus on Language Structures. Maximum seven new Vocabulary items per lesson. Limited Pronunciation practice.	Surveys/Short Oral Presentations/Drama Short Reading Texts and Paragraph Writing
12 (B2+) 4	17-17.5	All four skills integrated with an emphasis on Listening and Speaking. Synthesis of Language Structures. Maximum seven new Vocabulary items per lesson. Limited Pronunciation practice.	Conversations/Oral Presentations/Projects/Task-based Activities Argumentative/Descriptive Text Writing

*CEFR = The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages

The model curriculum aims to take students from a very introductory level of English-speaking competency (A1), all the way to the B2 level within the four-year timeframe. As was discussed before, the emphasis is clearly on ESL/TESOL elements, but writing competencies are designed to be built up. From paragraph writing to eventual text writing by the time students enter their final year, it can be seen that the desire is to put students on a trajectory that I would consider “composition preparatory”, especially when viewed within the larger university context. I argue that this is the case based on the CEFR language standard, which is the most internationally recognized standard of language literacy measurement. As students are expected to reach the B2 level by 12th grade, and as was discussed in the third chapter on composition at the university level, students after the preparatory year (the ones who have inadequate English literacy coming into university) are expected to be at the B1 level.

The reason why this can be described as “composition preparatory” is that according to the CEFR, the B2 level includes a description which pertains to writing. At this level, one, in theory, “can write an essay or report which develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail (and) can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem” (Council of Europe, n.d., p. 24). Additionally, at this level of competency, individuals “can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options (and) Can synthesize information and arguments from a number of sources” (Council of Europe, n.d., p. 24).

Table 2. *Composition Related B2 Level Descriptors (Council of Europe 6, 24)*

Overall Written Production	Can write clear, detailed texts on a variety of subjects related to his field of interest, synthesising and evaluating information and arguments from a number of sources
Creative Writing	Can write clear, detailed descriptions of real or imaginary events and experiences marking the relationship between ideas in clear connected text, and following established conventions of the genre concerned. Can write clear, detailed descriptions on a variety of subjects related to his/her field of interest. Can write a review of a film, book or play.
Reports & Essays	Can write an essay or report that develops an argument systematically with appropriate highlighting of significant points and relevant supporting detail. Can evaluate different ideas or solutions to a problem. Can write an essay or report which develops an argument, giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view and explaining the advantages and disadvantages of various options. Can synthesise information and arguments from a number of sources.
Self-assessment related to written interaction and production	I can write letters highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences. I can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to my interests. I can write an essay or report, passing on information or giving reasons in support of or against a particular point of view.


Of course, this is not to say that even if a student reaches the B2 level they will necessarily possess these competencies. The CEFR is not by any means “primarily oriented to academic language use”, but rather for particularly focused “foreign language learning” (McNamara et al., 2018, p. 17). Indeed, this is heavily debatable, and that must be mentioned in the context of scholarly discussion. In one study from an Australian University, it was found in the analysis of international students taking EAP (English for Academic Purposes) courses (relating to Academic Writing) that “the CEFR descriptors underrepresent the complexity of the challenges of academic writing, particularly its cognitive demands,” (McNamara et al., 2018, p. 16). This brings about a very important point, being that the Turkish National Curriculum has “been designed in accordance with the descriptive and pedagogical principles of the CEFR” (T.C. Milli Egitim Bakanligi, 2018, p. 4). What this means is that the curriculum is designed along with a particular standard that could very well be flawed itself when it comes to composition and academic writing. There could be several factors associated with this, but one significant one has to do with the “wording of the

descriptors”, which suggest “the kind of writing tasks to be found in advanced level general proficiency examinations, rather than the complex and unwieldy tasks of identification of relevant resources, evaluation of their relevance, and attribution and paraphrase” (McNamara et al., 2018, p. 23).

Despite this, the CEFR is an internationally recognized standard and has implications for many things beyond language competency. In our case, this is relevant to university selection and further study. In the Turkish University, students cannot proceed unless with their studies in EMI programs unless they meet the predetermined B1 threshold. No doubt, this level is then seen as one where students will hold a level of competence that is suitable for further academic study, and where they will have the skills needed to succeed in the required Academic Writing classes, akin to the standard ENGL 1101 & 1102 within universities in the United States. This is not just the case for the Turkish university, but for many international universities in general who use this standard for university entrance (Harsch, 2018). For example, in Europe, the CEFR level B2 is “chosen most often as minimum entrance requirement” (Harsch, 2018, p.103). Of course, these standards are not necessarily because they have a proven record of predicting academic success or for purely educational purposes, indeed, in Turkey’s case, a big reason for incorporating CEFR is due to its desire for ascension in the European Union (Tosuncuoglu & Peaci, 2019).

As we continue on with the discussion on composition instruction within Turkey, we also need to assess how the particular mentioned ideal goals are being reached. According to the National Curriculum, there seems to be a very strong evidence-based strategy on employing a variety of materials in order to reach the desired competencies (which are not at all specific to or aimed at composition). The National Curriculum itself does not make any reference to required resources, but rather, gives a large room for flexibility for individual teacher innovation. According to the National Curriculum, “the curriculum is intended to be specific enough to guide teachers, administrators, and material designers to have a framework for having an efficient English language teaching and learning experience and broad/flexible enough so that teachers can creatively adapt the content to meet their learners’ individual needs” (T.C. Milli Egitim Bakanligi, 2018, p. 19). Those that can be directly related to composition and writing instruction are highlighted in the wider list below:

Table 3. *Turkish National Curriculum Suggested Materials (T.C. Milli Egitim Bakanligi, 17)*

Format	Materials Suggested in the 9th- 12th Grades English Language Curricula	
Multimedia  Print	Movies TV/Radio Recordings Commercials Podcasts Infographics PPP Presentations Wikis Blogs V-logs E-mails Simulations Animations Animation Makers Virtual Environments Games/Fun Comics Maps Road Signs Posters Tables Timelines Patient Information Leaflets Brochures Advice Columns Invitee Lists Advertisements Shopping Lists Product Catalogues Recipes Coupons Call Center Dialogues Transportation Schedule Boards Travel Guides Notes/Messages Monolingual Dictionaries Planners Postcards/Greeting Cards Letters Tickets	Short Documentaries Short Lectures Interview Dialogues Phone Conversations Announcements Songs Websites Synchronous and Asynchronous CMC Online / Offline Newspapers /Magazines Online/Offline Pictures Picture Albums Contests/Quiz Shows Illustrations Realia (Real Objectives) Flashcards/Picturecards/Wordcards Song Lyrics Charts/Graphs Graphic Organizers Application Forms CVs/Letters of Intention Myths/Rhymes Poems Plays/Drama Surveys Short Stories Collaborative Stories Biographies Diary Entries Reflection Reports Peer and Self-Evaluation Checklists Jigsaw Readings Descriptive Texts Expository Texts Narratives Compare and Contrast Paragraphs Cause and Effect Texts Persuasive Texts Argumentative Texts Menus

In the National Curriculum, this multi-pronged approach actually shows great potential in the arena of composition education. The most direct of these materials, the ones highlighted in Figure 4, also show that there is quite a significant emphasis on writing and composition instruction. These instructional materials, such as narratives and argumentative, descriptive, persuasive, descriptive, and expository texts, are key components of first year composition programs at the university level in the United States, and of course, have direct implications in writing.

Another significant aspect that stands out is the high emphasis on “authentic materials”, which has been defined by many scholars “as texts that are produced by a real speaker or writer for a real audience”, such as newspaper articles and radio programs” (Huda, 2017, p. 1909-10). Authentic texts have been analyzed within L2 writing education to be effective tools in increasing motivation and cultural awareness, engaging students, and allowing them to gain real world exposure (Albiladi, 2018). This is a central and stated part of the National Curriculum (T.C. Milli Egitim Bakanligi, 2018, p. 6).

The National Curriculum also includes a significant focus on ICT (Information and Communications Technology), employing a “blended-learning environment for language learners” (T.C. Milli Egitim Bakanligi, 2018, p. 6). The recommendation given by the official curriculum is based on a scholarly study promoting a blended model which is essentially a combination with face-to-face learning with approximately 45% online materials and activities. Whilst this is for language teaching in general (taking into account that composition is by no means a central focus of the curriculum), this had direct implications on any composition instruction delivered. In one study of academic writing at a European university, it was found that “ICT plays a significant and facilitating role in the development of writing skills, particularly for students” (Klimova & Poulouva, 2013, p. 4). At the secondary school EFL writing level, in particular, one study found that the advantages of ICT included “attracting students’ attention, facilitating students’ learning process, helping to improve students’ vocabulary knowledge and promoting meaningful learning” (Md Yunus et al., 2013, p. 1).

The National Curriculum promotes a building blocks approach to composition education that gives opportunities for important elements of writing instruction to be delivered to students, such as exposure to varying types of composition and technological competencies. This can be simply stated, in that by Grade 12, before students graduate, objectives such as students being able “*to write an opinion essay about qualities of a good friend by stating reasons*” or being able to “*write an argumentative essay including solutions for disadvantaged people’s problems*” are listed within the curriculum. In this table, all the writing objectives over the course of four years, from the A1 to B2 English competency level are discussed. Ideally, students in the country are to take these skills with them into university. Particularly, when analyzing the final two years of high school study, there seems to be a large emphasis on making sure students gain exposure to a wide variety of genres and writing applications.

At this stage, however, it is important to view writing and composition in its own context in Turkey and with regard to the larger stated objectives for composition. Ultimately, these objectives differ because writing is simply a part and process of the TESOL focused curriculum, as I keep mentioning. The university system that Turkish high school graduates go into, is one that is completely different than the US model in terms of FYC. In that sense, the standard that high schools are school students are expected to build within the country, and the further training that they are afforded makes for a significant degree of their formal writing education.

4. Discussion

The English curriculum in Turkey is designed with goals in mind that are essentially aimed at the propagation of English generally due to its importance for further economic

growth. The prime aim is not for students to write, as much as to communicate and have a certain level of literacy in the language. Whilst in practice the CEFR based curriculum shows a multi-skill approach including writing, we must remember that there is always going to be a different story in practice. However, research on the matter is limited, and to date, not much literature exists on curriculum evaluations with regard to its objectives. In that sense, getting a real sense of writing competency at the secondary school level is extremely difficult, and an important area of further research. To do this, data collection is crucial, particularly pertaining to writing samples, which can then be analyzed to see if CEFR objectives have been met. On top of this, evaluation surveys by practitioners and students would be of great use towards assessment.

From a bird's eye view, however, there are some indicators which allow us to see that composition education at the high school level in practice, falls far shorter than its expectations. This has to do with a variety of issues that - as is the case for the other areas of English education in the country - have to do with EFL related concerns. Perhaps the most prominent of these concerns is that students do not meet the intended B2 level of proficiency, and very often fall far shorter than that. In one study, it was found in the observation of certain schools that a "considerable number of high school students in Turkey do not meet curricular requirements for English language proficiency" (Isikli & Tarakcioglu, 2017, p. 92). Additionally, not pertaining to writing education in specific, but generally, in the analysis of the most updated curriculum, there was found to be a "lack of congruence and contingency among the intended and observed transactions within the scope of the updated secondary school curriculum" (Aksoy, 2020, p. 16). Indeed, this can be essentially expressed as "a remarkable gap between what is intended and what is carried out" (Aksoy, 2020, p. 16). Relating to this, it can be seen that the low proficiency level discussed before makes certain curricular goals impossible, along with other elements such as lacking practice-based teacher training in contemporary teaching methodologies and in managing, assessing, and approaching the curricular changes, as well as a need for a curriculum more in line with the realities of Turkey (Aksoy, 2020).

This, however, takes a certain remedy in the fact that the university level preparatory English education system and subsequent composition education does not rely on secondary school education. In that sense, the relationship between secondary and tertiary writing skills is less pronounced in Turkey, because high school isn't necessarily seen by universities within the country as sufficient for making students ready to write at the level needed for academic success at the university, whereas this is the case elsewhere. This is not unique to Turkey of course. Indeed, most American colleges and universities offer special courses (often referred to as "remedial" courses) for students who lack some of the skills that are critical for college-level work, with this type of education being widespread (Attewell et al., 2006, p. 886). Even in the case where university remediation is completely effective, for educators to rely on that premise makes the secondary school period at the minimum a wasted educational opportunity.

5. Conclusions

In reflection of the survey on the secondary school curriculum, it can be seen that it, based on its ultimate goals and objectives, which are very broadly stated, “to engage learners of English in stimulating, motivating, and enjoyable learning environments so that they become effective, fluent, and self-directed users of English” actually does allow for a multitude of competency development opportunities (T.C. Milli Egitim Bakanligi, 2018, p. 4). The curriculum has been greatly revised in its current form and focuses on a multi-competency development approach, which upon observation is quite effective in promoting a strong base for composition and writing competencies. Through the exposure to various types of writing (academic, business, formal, literary, translation) and instruction on rhetorical aspects associated with consisting of a noteworthy part of the curriculum, this potential for developing strong foundation skills in students is stressed. Much of the evidence-based elements that directly pertain to effective composition education, such as the usage of authentic materials, the implementation of ICT, and the exposure to a variety of genres, do lay a framework for future success in composition.

There is a general gap of scholarship within the area of secondary school composition education generally, and this underscores the fact that writing, at an international level, hasn't seen the same type of attention as it has at the university level. Turkey's national curriculum which has been inspired by international standards is an example of this. Writing in English hasn't yet been singled out as a core competency in explicit terms, other than being a major part of the general English competency acquisition process. This has its reasons because unlike in native countries, writing cannot be composition focused but rather, is a complement in the larger English learning process.

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