

The Impact of Writing-to-Learn Activities on Students' Academic Achievement in Social Studies Course and Relevant Student Opinions

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Abstract

The present study aimed to examine the possible influence of writing-to-learn activities on students' academic performance and achievement in social studies course and to collect student opinions in this regard. This study was carried out with a total of 83 (43 in the experimental group and 40 in the control group) 5th grade students studying in a middle school affiliated to the Turkish Ministry of National Education in Erzurum in the 2021/22 academic year. A test consisting of 20 questions was administered to the control and experimental groups in order to measure academic achievement prior to carrying out the activities. The experimental group was being instructed through the use of writing-to-learn activities, while the control group, in line with the curriculum in-use. Following the activities, the control and experimental groups were both administered the post-tests. At the end of the implementation part of the study, a focus group interview was conducted with 8 randomly selected students from the classes involved in the experimental group. Quantitative data were analysed with descriptive statistics, and qualitative data with content analysis. The results obtained indicated a statistically significance in favour of the experimental group when the average post-test scores of the experimental group students and those of the control group students were compared. Furthermore, the rest of the data revealed that the writing-to-learn activities were favoured by the majority of the students, and regarded as having positive aspects.

Keywords: Academic Achievement, Social Studies Course, Writing-to-Learn Activities

Introduction

Apart from the presence of numerous changes in all areas of our ever-changing and developing world, it is also an inevitable necessity for the field of education to be in the cycle of development and change. What is meant by change and development is a learning environment where students are at the centre of the educational process, based on individual differences away from memorization, and where they can build their own knowledge and take an active role in the learning, assessment and evaluation processes (Dilek, 2016). Creating such an environment is possible with the constructivist learning approach. Instructing the courses with different methods and techniques by using many materials in the learning environment is highly likely to make the course more fun and understandable. Unlike the traditional understanding of education, constructivism emphasizes that the course should be enriched with various activities and exercises, that the interests and needs of the students should be prioritized, and that the student should be active in a dynamic course process (Dilek, 2016).

In constructivist learning theory, it is deemed necessary to not only give students information, but also use teaching techniques and methods suitable for their developmental needs (Erginer, 2016). The use of methods and activities that make students active not only increases permanence in learning, but also motivates students to like the lesson, provides an opportunity to better understand the lesson and increases the interest in it. As a consequence, it is of great importance for students to be dynamic in class (Yıldırım, 2019). Furthermore, a learning environment in which students have their own say, where their talents and imagination are prioritized, in such a way that allows students to fly freely with their own wings, through the relevant activities, liberate students and enable their talents to emerge. Writing activities are also one of a variety of activities that make students active with many positive aspects for students in that their imagination is activated.

Writing can be referred to as an internal reinforcement cycle involving the hands, eyes, and brain. Besides this, when writing, both hemispheres of the brain (right and left hemispheres) are fully active. It is obvious that students do much more with writing than is known and that it is an exceptionally good learning method (Emig 1977). According to Emig (1977), writing corresponds to a learning strategy that is strong, specific, unique, embodying the process and product. In other words, with writing, students can create a unique verbal structure and progress at their own pace while doing this. Writing also provides feedback and reinforcement as it is necessary for an effective learning environment. Students can have the opportunity to think at their own level and express their thoughts through writing. Writing also makes it easier for students to understand, enables them to experience different concepts, and helps them to make sense of ideas by changing the way they think. It is, therefore, a critical part of the higher-order thinking process (Mason & Boscolo, 2000). Moreover, students can communicate better with writing, gain critical

thinking skills, and become capable of producing new information (Klein, 1999).

The writing style used to evaluate students' understanding of a certain concept is called writing-to-learn (McDermott, 2010). Students are expected to use their newly acquired educational experiences in writing-to-learn activities by associating them with their previous knowledge. In this manner, students can have the possibility to reflect the knowledge they have learned through their own thoughts (Klein, 1999). Considering these activities in more detail, it is essential to examine the model created by Hand and Prain (2002). This model includes how, for whom, for what purpose, on which subjects and what types of writing-to-learn activities are to be used for learning purposes. The given titles are mentioned in detail in the table below.

One way to help students truly learn the concepts contained in social studies is to have them write such concepts down. Writing activities can help students develop important literacy skills (McDermott, 2010; Firek, 2006), enable them to focus during class discussions, and enrich the lesson for learning topics (Firek, 2006). With its numerous positive effects, this learning model (Emig 1977; Mason & Boscolo, 2000; McDermott, 2010; Klein, 1999; Kayaalp & Şimşek, 2020; Günel, Kabataş Memiş & Büyükkasap, 2009; Slinger-Friedman & Patterson, 2012; Ay, 2018; Özkan, 2019) should be encouraged to use together with its different types in social studies. It is well-known that a social studies curriculum aims to express and interpret thoughts, concepts, feelings, opinions and facts both written and orally. It also aims to provide individuals with skills such as using Turkish correctly, beautifully, and effectively (MEB, 2018). Considering all these, in order for students to gain writing skills in the social studies course, writing-to-learn activities should be used in such a way that is organized in accordance with the content of the learning area.

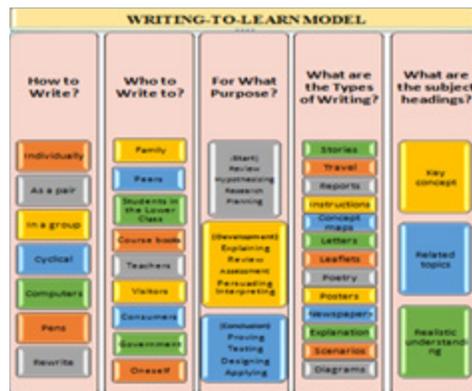


Figure 1 Writing-to-Learn Model

Aim of the Study

The aim of the present study was to find out the influence of writing-to-learn activities on the academic achievement of students in social studies course and to determine student opinions in this regard. Based on this purpose, the students in this study were instructed through writing-to-learn activities, aiming to increase their academic achievement with the pertinent activities.

Significance of the Study

With its content, social studies course aims to enable students to gain skills, knowledge, values and attitudes related to social life. Unless the content of the social studies course, which has intense information content, is enriched, students may inevitably find the course boring. Today, many similar problems are present about the social studies course. As an example, it is known that while teaching the social studies lesson, students and teachers are generally dependent on the textbook (Şimşek & Kaymakçı, 2015) and are limited to a few methods in which students are not active at all. In this context, it is considered that involving writing-to-learn activities are likely to prevent the lessons from being dull, provide students with various skills, make them active, and enrich the lesson as a whole. In this respect, the use of these activities in social studies teaching is of great importance.

Problem Statement

Does the use of writing-to-learn activities in the unit called, “Production, Distribution and Consumption” in the middle school 5th grade social

studies lesson have an impact on students’ academic achievement and attitudes towards the lesson?

Sub-Problems

1. Is there a statistical significance between the average pre-test and post-test scores of the experimental and control group students?
2. Do the qualitative data obtained from the interviews carried out with the experimental group students in which writing-to-learn activities were used in the social studies lesson support the quantitative data?

Premises

It is believed that the participants responded honestly to the questions asked during the focus group interview.

Limitations

This study was limited to the 5th grade students in a middle school in the city centre of Erzurum, Turkey in the 2021/22 academic year, as well as to the course module, named ‘Production, Distribution and Consumption’.

Method

Defined as “more than one way of seeing”, the mixed methods research design was employed for the purposes of this study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). According to Creswell (2019), mixed methods research design is a research approach used in the fields of social, behavioural and health sciences, with two data sets, in which both qualitative and quantitative data are collected, complementing each other, and then conclusions are drawn with the

whole of these two data sets in order to understand the research problems. In other words, researchers can use the mixed methods research design in any situation where they cannot answer the research questions with either qualitative or quantitative method. Furthermore, with the mixed method, it can be aimed to determine whether the quantitative and qualitative results are close to each other or support each other, and to make the boundaries of the study wider or to create new hypotheses or research questions (Baki & Gökçek, 2012).

There are four basic mixed method designs: the convergent parallel design, concurrent nested mixed methods design (embedded), the exploratory sequential design and explanatory sequential design. The present study employed the embedded design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Embedded design refers to the type of design in which a qualitative phase is inserted into a quantitative study such as an experimental study or a quantitative phase into a qualitative study such as a case study (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

In the quantitative part of this study, a quasi-experimental design was used along with a control group who were administered a pre-test and post-test. In this model, there are two groups: the control group and the experimental group, formed by unbiased sampling. Necessary measurements are made before and after the experiment under equal conditions in both groups (Karasar, 2017).

After the quasi-experimental procedure, a focus group interview was held with the experimental group students to identify their views on the writing-to-learn activities concerned. A focus group interview is an interview technique in which individuals focusing on a particular subject are allowed to hear each other's views within a group, and consequently group dynamics influence the scope and depth of the answers given to the questions (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

Study Sample

The study sample consisted of the 5th grade students studying in a middle school affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in Erzurum, Turkey in the 2021/22 academic year. The study included classrooms 5/A, 5/B, 5D to make up the experimental

group of 43 students, and the 5/C, 5/E, 5/F to make up the control group of 40 students.

The study sample in the qualitative part of the study consisted of 8 randomly selected students from the experimental group comprising those studying in the classes 5/A, 5/B, and 5D. After the quantitative procedure, a focus group interview was held with the students to obtain their opinions on the experimental study concerning writing-to-learn activities.

Data Collection Tools

Academic Achievement Test on the Module: 'Production, Distribution and Consumption'

For the purpose of measuring the effects of writing-to-learn activities on students' academic achievement in social studies course, the researcher prepared 30 four-choice multiple-choice academic achievement tests in accordance with the purpose of this study.

While preparing the academic achievement test, the overall difficulty level of the questions was established according to Bloom's taxonomy based on the intended learning outcomes specified for the course module named, 'Production, Distribution and Consumption' of the 5th grades, and a table of specifications was prepared showing the number of questions and the type of questions appropriate for the intended learning outcomes. A professor, a doctor, and an active social studies teacher were consulted to verify the construct validity of the prepared academic achievement test. Corrections from the relevant field experts were taken into account and corrections were made on the academic achievement test, accordingly. With the aim of ensuring the reliability of the achievement test, a pilot study was conducted with a total of 50 students studying at 6th grade who had already completed the module in the first semester of the 2021/22 academic year. The data obtained with the pilot study were analysed with the Test Analysis Program (TAP). As a consequence of the reliability verification studies, the questions that decreased the reliability were removed from the measurement tool to include 20 questions so that the content validity could be preserved. The questions removed from the test were 4, 6, 8, 11, 13, 16, 19, 22, 23, and 25.

As the reliability coefficient got closer to "1", the measurements could be considered error-free.

According to this information, “1” denotes error-free measurement (Can, 2017). The item discrimination index can vary between -1.0 and +1.0. Items with negative discrimination value should be removed from the scale (Büyüköztürk et al., 2014). The item difficulty index ranges from 0 and 1. As the difficulty index gets closer to 0, it can be interpreted that the item is a difficult one, and as it gets closer to 1, the item is considered to be an easy one (Hasaebi, Terzi & Kucuk, 2020). The average difficulty index of the academic achievement test in the study was 0.59, while the average discrimination index of the test 0.52. The KR-20 (Alpha) reliability coefficient of the academic achievement test for the 5th grade module ‘Production, Distribution and Consumption’ developed according to the results of the analysis was calculated as 0.87. The academic achievement test used in the application process was found of medium difficulty, reliable, and distinctive.

Focus Group Interviews

With a focus on examining the impact of writing-to-learn activities on students’ academic achievement in social studies course, a quasi-experimental design was used with a pre-test and post-test administered to the control group. For the purpose of supporting the quantitative data after the activity procedure, a focus group interview was conducted with 8 of the experimental group students and the necessary data were collected by means of a voice recorder.

Application

Prior to starting the application, the experimental group and the control group were each administered the multiple-choice pre-test consisting of 20 questions covering the 5th Grade module named, ‘Production, Distribution and Consumption’. The students in the experimental group were informed about the purpose of the study, writing-to-learn activities, in addition to how to carry out the activities, and the students were prepared for the application. Then, the experimental group students were instructed through writing-to-learn activities for 5 weeks regarding the module named ‘Production, Distribution and Consumption’. During the application stage, the students were distributed 10 illustrated and colourful content pages suitable for the intended learning outcomes which had been prepared by the researcher, and they were asked to complete the activities on the given pages. The activities included fairy tale-writing, letter-writing, pictures, speech bubbles-writing, news article-writing, diary-writing, story-writing, poetry-writing, as well as making posters and comic strips suitable for six intended learning outcomes. While a process based on these activities was followed in the experimental group for five weeks, the current curriculum was used in the control group. After the application was completed, the participants in the experimental and control groups were all administered a post-test and the obtained data were analysed.

Table 1 Examples of Writing-to-Learn Activities about ‘Production, Distribution and Consumption’ Module Applied to the Experimental Group

Intended Learning Outcomes	Writing-to-learn activities
1. Students will be able to analyse the local economic activities (3 hours).	Narrating the economic activities in our country with fairy tales. Writing a letter by associating common economic activities in the city with the geographical features of the city.
Students will be able to recognize the professions that develop depending on the local economic activities (3 hours).	Painting pictures to introduce the professions that develop depending on the economic activities in and around the place of residence. Explaining the professions that develop depending on the economic activities in and around the place of residence with speech bubbles.
Students will be able to analyse the impact of local economic activities on people’s social lives (3 hours).	Preparing a news article on the effects of the onset of the winter season. Writing a diary about the impact of economic activities on social life based on the living environment.

Students will be able to analyse the production, distribution and consumption network of products to meet basic needs (3 hours).	Writing a story describing the production, distribution and consumption network. Writing three stanzas about production, distribution and consumption.
Students will be able to develop new ideas collaboratively based on production, distribution and consumption (2 hours).	Preparing posters by generating new ideas about production, consumption and distribution.
Students will be able to use their rights as a conscious consumer(1 hour).	Making comic strips showing conscious and unconscious consumers.

Focus Group Interview Process

The interviews were carried out in the school library with 8 experimental group students studying in a middle school affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in Erzurum, Turkey. After the quasi-experimental application was completed, the students' opinions on writing-to-learn activities were taken. The researcher prepared an atmosphere where student could freely express their opinions. In the focus group interview, the students were asked six questions and the interview lasted about half an hour. Interviews with students were recorded using a voice recorder and notepad. Focus group interview questions are listed in the table below.

Subject: Student Opinions on Writing-to-learn Activities

No of Students: 8

- Which of the writing-to-learn activities did you like the most? Can you explain by giving your reasons?
- Are there any activities or exercises that you did not like from among writing-to-learn activities? If yes, can you explain why?
- Do you think there are positive aspects of writing-to-learn activities? If you think there are positive aspects, can you explain them by giving your reasons?
- Do you think there are negative aspects of writing-to-learn activities? If you think there are negative aspects, can you explain them by giving your reasons?
- How do you think writing-to-learn activities have affected you in academic terms?
- How do you think writing-to-learn activities have affected your attitude towards the social studies course?

Figure 2 Focus Group Interview Questions

Data Analysis

Since this study was built on the mixed methods research design, the quantitative and qualitative dimensions were analysed with different types of analysis. While the quantitative data of the study were analysed with descriptive statistics via SPSS 26 statistical package program, the analysis of qualitative data was made with content analysis. Generally speaking, descriptive statistics are conducted by describing research data and explaining its basic features. This type of statistics starts with a dataset. Researchers often use descriptive statistics to better understand and summarize the key numerical characteristics of the dataset (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015).

Qualitative data collected by a voice recorder and note-taking for the focus group interview were analysed using content analysis. The systematic iterative technique in which certain words within a text are summarized with smaller content categories through coding within some particular rules is called content analysis (Büyüköztürk et al., 2014). In this context, content analysis is done in four stages: coding the data, determining the themes, organizing and defining the data according to the codes and themes, and interpreting the results (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016).

The focus group interview data collected by audio recording was converted into a written text, which was then shared with the students who participated in the focus group interview so that their confirmation could be obtained for the purpose of achieving reliability of the data analysis. Furthermore, in order for the data analysis to yield reliable results, the written data were analysed independently by two different researchers. After the researchers had read the written data several times, they divided them into categories. For each category created,

relevant statements were presented according to the responses given by the students. The resulting data were interpreted by creating frequency and percentage tables and supported by direct quotations (by coding the students' names as S1, S2, S3S8).

In calculating the percentages of the tables regarding the questions in which the students expressed more than one opinion, what was considered numerically was not the number of students, but the opinions expressed on each particular subject.

Results and Interpretation

Table 2 Independent Samples t-test Results Regarding the Pre-test Scores of the Experimental and Control Group Students

Variable	Group	N	X	SS	t	sd (df)	p
Pre-test score	Experimental group	43	52.56	17.30	-0.44	81	0.67
	Control group	40	54.13	15.40			

As shown in Table 2, according to the independent samples t-test results, no statistically significant difference [t(81)=-0.44, p>.05] is present between

the average pre-test score of the experimental group students (X= 52.56) and that of the control group students (X= 54.13).

Table 3 Independent Samples t-test Results Regarding the Post-Test Scores of the Experimental and Control Group Students

Variable	Group	N	X	SS	t	sd (df)	p
Post-test score	Experimental Group	43	73.14	10.69	2.50	81	0.014
	Control Group	40	64.38	20.10			

As can be seen in Table 3, a statistically significant difference is apparent in favour of the experimental group, given the average post-test score of the experimental group students (X= 73.14) and that of the control group students (X=63.38) according to the independent sample t-test results [t(81)=2.50, p<.05]. In this case, it can be argued that the inclusion of writing-to-learn activities had a significant effect on achievement in the module named 'Production, Distribution and Consumption'. The effect size value was calculated as d = 0.55. Values that the effect size (d) can take are often considered as small, medium and large, for the values of 0.2, 0.5 and 0.8, respectively (Green & Salkind, 2005, as cited in Can, 2017).

Poetry	2	11.11
Poster	2	11.11
Fairy tale	1	5.56

As shown in Table 4, four of the students who were interviewed in the focus group stated that they liked the news article writing activity, four of them the diary-writing activity, and three of them the comic-strips-making activity.

Results Obtained from the Focus Group Interview
Table 4 Which of the Writing-to-Learn Activities did you like the Most? (n=8)

Responses	Frequency	%
News article	4	22.22
Diary	4	22.22
Comic strips	3	16.67
Speech bubbles	2	11.11

Table 5 Can you Explain by Giving your Reasons? (n=8)

Responses	Frequency	%
I enjoyed the activities	5	50
The activities helped me to be more knowledgeable	2	20
I can keep them as a memory	1	10
I had fun during the activities	1	10
The activities improved my imagination	1	10

Considering the possible reasons why students liked the writing-to-learn activities, the expression "I enjoyed the activities" turned out to have the highest frequency. The opinions of the students regarding

the first question are directly presented below:

- **S1:** “I liked the poster-making activity. I enjoyed it. I enjoy drawing and writing.”
- **S2:** “I liked the news article-writing activity the most because I like informing people. I like journaling, and I loved the speech bubbles-writing activity.”
- **S3:** “...I really like writing poetry, and I love to match things up. I liked the comic-strips-making activity. I also liked the speech bubbles activity because while drawing comic strips, new things came to my mind, and I also drew pictures.”
- **S4:** “I liked the news article-writing activity, too. I like informing people too. I also liked keeping a diary, because we will have memories about this.”
- **S5:** “I liked the poetry writing activity because I like to write poetry myself. I also liked the comic-strips-making and diary-writing activities because I like to write and draw pictures.”
- **S6:** “I liked to write news articles because I really like writing. I liked diary-writing too because I love to write and also write about what happens in my life.”
- **S7:** “I liked the poster activity too because we both drew pictures and had fun.”
- **S8:** “I liked to write news articles too. Secondly, I liked to prepare comic-strips. I also liked writing fairy tales because there were unimaginable things. I imagined a lot owing to that.”

Table 6 Are there Any Activities or Exercises that you did not Like from among Writing-to-Learn Activities? If Yes, can you Explain why? (n=8)

Responses	Frequency	%
I liked all the activities	5	62.50
I did not like the diary writing activity.	2	25.00
I did not like the activity of writing a news article.	1	12.50

As shown in Table 6 regarding the second interview question, 5 of the students indicated that they liked all the activities; two of the students stated that they did not like the diary-writing activity; and one of them did not like the news article-writing activity. In the same framework, S5 and S2 stated that

they just did not like the activities as their reason, while the reason stated by student 8 was irrelevant. The students’ views on the above table are directly quoted below:

- **S2:** “I didn’t like writing a diary, I just didn’t enjoy it.”
- **S1:** “No. I really liked them all.”
- **S3:** “I really enjoyed them all.”
- **S4:** “I really enjoyed them all.”
- **S5:** “I didn’t like to write a news article at all.”
- **S7:** “I really liked them all.”
- **S8:** “I didn’t like diary-writing because it was revealing about my private life. This is something I do not like.”
- **S6:** “I liked them all.”

Table 7 Do you Think there are Positive Aspects of Writing-to-Learn Activities? (n=8)

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	8	100
No	0	0

All of the students in the focus group interview indicated that writing-to-learn activities had positive aspects.

Table 8 If you Think there are Positive Aspects, can you Explain them by Giving your Reasons? (n=8)

Responses	Frequency	%
The activities provided the opportunity to do revision	6	42.86
The activities were entertaining	3	21.43
The activities were informative	2	14.29
My writing got much nicer	1	7.14
The activities gave the chance to assess and evaluate	1	7.14
I don’t know	1	7.14

As can be seen in Table 8, the responses indicating that the activities provided the opportunity to do revision and that the activities were entertaining are the responses with the highest frequency. Relevant student opinions are given below:

- **S1:** “Yes, there are positive aspects. For example, we can revise what we have learned.”
- **S2:** “The activities allow us to revise the topics we have covered. It increases our knowledge.”
- **S3:** “The activities allow us to do revision. Our teachers can assess the extent to which we have learned and how much we have learned. It gives the opportunity to revise during the day and it is fun.”
- **S4:** “The activities let us revise the lesson topics and make the lessons more fun.”
- **S5:** “They allow us to revise what we have learned and improve our writing.”
- **S6:** “I don’t know”
- **S7:** “They allow us to do revision. They also make learning more fun, and our intelligence grows.”
- **S8:** “The activities give us information.”

Table 9 Do you Think there are Negative Aspects of Writing-to-Learn Activities? (n=8)

Responses	Frequency	%
Yes	6	75
No	2	25

Six of the students in the focus group interview said that writing-to-learn activities had some negative aspects, while 2 of them found no negative aspects.

Table 10 If you Think there are Negative Aspects, can you Explain them by Giving your Reasons? (n=8)

Responses	Frequency	%
They were boring	5	55.56
We could not do the activity on the topic	2	22.22
They were hard to understand	2	22.22

As can be seen in Table 10, the reason that some of the writing-to-learn activities were considered boring was the reason with the highest frequency according to the answers given by the students. The student opinions on this topic are as follows:

- **S3:** “I don’t think there are any downsides. Not for me though. Why not? It is because the activities were entertaining, and how can I say,

- we both liked them and we studied. What is negative about studying?”
- **S8:** “I got so bored with writing fairy tales and adriary. I said to myself: ‘When will it end?’”
- **S7:** “The letter writing activity was horrible. I didn’t like it at all. It got boring.”
- **S6:** “The activities were boring because I couldn’t understand.”
- **S5:** “At first it felt a bit boring. I got bored with the speech bubbles and the news article writing activities.”
- **S1:** “It got boring sometimes when I couldn’t come up with anything. Nothing crossed my mind for the fairy tale-writing and I couldn’t come up with anything for the news article writing activity, either.”
- **S2:** “I was upset when I thought I couldn’t come up with many ideas in the comic-strips-making activity.”
- **S4:** “There are no downsides.”

Table 11 How do you Think Writing-to-Learn Activities have Affected you in Academic Terms? (n=8)

Responses	Frequency	%
The activities increased my exam scores	5	35.71
They help us revise	4	28.57
They make the topic be understood easier	2	14.29
They prepare us for the exams	2	14.29
They help us enjoy the lesson	1	7.14

All of the students stated that writing-to-learn activities contributed to their academic achievement. In this connection, the responses regarding the activities’ benefit to increase their exam scores and help students revise for what is learned are among the expressions with the highest frequency. Relevant student opinions are as follows:

- **S1:** “The activities affected me positively. They were like a revision of the course for me, so they contributed a lot and made the lesson easier for us to understand later on.”
- **S3:** “I think they quite helped because I had forgotten some of the local economic activities. When they came out in the exam, it was good

because I revised them with the activities you gave us and because you carried out the activities, so I got 90. Working with you instead of working at home alone made a greater contribution.”

- **S2:** “It was a revision of the course for me, and it was like a preparation for the exam because I forgot to study for the exam, so it was like a revision for me.”
- **S5:** “As our friend said, it was preparation for the exam, and it was like a revision. It helped me in the exam. I got 91.”
- **S6:** “My exam grade has improved, so the activities have helped me, which is good for me.”
- **S7:** “I’d gotten 75 on the first test, but I got 80 on this test. I wrote down what I had learned.”
- **S8:** “They increased my academic achievement. I used to hate social studies, but now I’ve started to like the activities you did, except for the ones I didn’t like.”
- **S4:** “It helped me on my exams. Last year I got a little lower mark. My grade is higher this semester.”

- **S7:** “I didn’t like a few of the activities, but the rest were very nice. They did something like that again when I was in elementary school. We wrote a text, and then I started to like the lesson after that.”
- **S8:** “In a word, it was perfect. The activities helped us like the lesson.”
- **S1:** “I used to like the social studies class less. Now I’m starting to like it more.”
- **S2:** “I used to never want to study for social studies class. I found it boring, and never liked it because I didn’t understand it. I started to like the social studies lesson more with the activities you did.”
- **S3:** “I had something negative about it before, so I never liked social studies class. Now, since I learned about economic activities, I’ve started to like it even more because when I go home, I tell my sister what I’ve learned.”
- **S4:** “As we did these activities with you, I understood the subjects more. My thoughts changed and I started to like the lesson.”
- **S5:** “Conscious consumer, production, distribution or consumption; I did not know their meaning. I never understood. Thanks to you, I’ve understood them thoroughly. I never liked social studies and when I got home I was bored. I wanted to solve a test, but I didn’t want to solve social studies tests. I’m starting to like now.”

Table12 How do you Think Writing-to-Learn Activities have Affected your Attitude towards the Social Studies Course? (n=8)

Responses	Frequency	%
The activities helped me like the lesson	8	61.54
They provided a better understanding of the topics	3	23.08
The activities made the lesson fun	2	15.38

Table 12 demonstrates that the activities conducted in line with the writing-to-learn method positively affected the students’ attitude towards the lesson and helped them like it. In addition, three students stated that the subjects were better understood thanks to writing-to-learn activities and two students stated that the lesson became more fun. The relevant student opinions are directly presented below:

- **S6:** “I hadn’t understood anything about agriculture or topics like that. But I enjoyed learning about them with activities and it was very good for me.”

Discussion and Conclusion

This study examined the impact of activities prepared in line with the writing-to-learn method in the social studies course on the academic achievement of 5thGrade students and discussed the relevant student opinions from 8 randomly selected students from the experimental group. According to the first finding obtained in the study, no statistically significant difference existed between the average pre-test score of the experimental group students and that of the control group students. In a similar sense, Karaçağıl and Kiriş Avaroğulları (2017) stated in their study that there was no significant difference between the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups. Uçar (2019) also found no significant difference between the pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups in terms of

academic achievement in a thesis study on the effect of such activities on students' academic achievement. Furthermore, according to the independent samples t-test results, there was a statistically significant difference between the average of the post-test scores of the experimental group students and that of the control group students in favour of the experimental group. Research shows the presence of a number of similar studies supporting this result (Günel et al., 2009; Kayaalp & Şimşek, 2020; Karaçağıl & Kiriş Avaroğulları, 2017; Yasul, 2019; Ay, 2018; Köksal, 2019; Hooley & Bailey, 2005; İncirci, 2020; Aktepe, 2020; Uçar, 2019; Klein & Rose, 2010; Eker & Coşkun, 2012; Maxim, 1998).

The data obtained as a result of the interview with the students indicated that the most popular activities in writing-to-learn activities were news article-writing and diary-writing activities. It was concluded that the reason for preferring the said activities was that the students liked such activities. Similarly, Eker and Coşkun (2012) concluded that teaching through course diaries was efficacious on the knowledge retention levels of students. Hooley and Bailey (2005), on the other hand, mentioned the importance of diary-writing in geography lesson. In addition, Kayaalp and Şimşek (2020) emphasized that the use of news article-writing activity was appreciated by the students in their study.

The rest of the data obtained shows that the activities were favoured by the majority of the students. In addition, all of the students who participated in the interview stated that writing-to-learn activities had positive aspects in that the topics could be revised that way and that the activities were entertaining, to justify their reasons. In conformity with this result, Yasul (2019) stated that writing-to-learn activities not only provide better reinforcement of the subjects, but also enable students to learn better. Similarly, there are studies that conclude that writing-to-learn activities make lessons fun (Kayaalp & Şimşek, 2020; Yasul, 2019; Ay, 2018; Aktepe, 2020; Uçar, 2019).

The majority of the students who participated in the interview said that writing-to-learn activities had negative aspects since some activities were boring. Similarly, Aktepe (2020) stated that writing-to-learn activities could create a feeling of boredom

in students. Sarıkaya and Sökmen (2019) concluded that students found writing boring and difficult, and determined that some factors such as the unique structure of writing as well as other factors such as family and social environment could be influential in this regard.

Another result is that all of the students were of the opinion that writing-to-learn activities contributed considerably to their academic achievement since they emphasized their increased exam scores as a consequence of having the opportunity to revise for the exam. In line with this result, there are studies reporting that writing-to-learn activities contribute to academic achievement (Ay, 2018; Dummer, Cook, Parker, Barret & Hull 2008). However, unlike this result, Slinger-Friedman and Patterson (2012) found that the writing-to-learn activities did not result in much change on student grades.

In addition, writing-to-learn activities proved to have positively affected the attitudes of the students and helped them like the lesson. Similarly, Köksal (2019) and Ay (2018) concluded in their study that students' attitudes were positively affected. On the other hand, Yasul (2019) stated that writing-to-learn activities negatively affected students' attitudes towards writing.

Recommendations

- This study was conducted in the 5th grade social studies course instructing the chapter named 'Production, Distribution and Consumption'. As a result of the interviews with the students, it could be suggested that similar studies be carried out on other chapters in the social studies curriculum and at different grade levels by using writing-to-learn activities.
- This study found that writing-to-learn activities increased the academic achievement of 5th grade students and provided many benefits for the students. Considering this result, it is essential to include writing-to-learn activities in the social studies course.
- Writing-to-learn activities should be selected according to the content of the intended learning outcomes, well planned and implemented.
- Writing-to-learn activities can be used in social studies course in order to enable students to

gain higher-order thinking skills (analysis, synthesis and evaluation) as specified in Bloom's taxonomy.

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