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DOMAIN SPECIFIC BELIEFS ABOUT WRITING AND WRITING PERFORMANCE OF PRESERVICE ENGLISH TEACHERS: IS THERE ANY RELATIONSHIP?¹

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Abstract

Learning as a retrospective phenomenon can make learners transmit their past as an ingredient while they are (re)structuring their present and future. Previous and present experiences can form a basis for cognitive, behavioral and motivational factors which can create a cognitive load for learners and affect their learning process. In this regard, current study aims to investigate first-year undergraduates' beliefs about writing and relation of these beliefs to writing performance in essay writing. A total of 147 students studying in ELT department of a Turkish university participated in the research. Their domain-specific beliefs about writing were determined through the Beliefs about Writing Survey (BAWS). Writing performance was measured on an essay writing task by calculating both overall grade and six component grades. As a result, multiple regression analysis affirmed that beliefs about writing accounted for writing performance independently. Pearson correlation values showed that some beliefs about writing were adaptive and associated with higher writing scores (e.g. "Adapt to the Audience"). Also, some belief subcategories were associated with each other. The results of the present study have been discussed along with the related literature on beliefs about writing and writing performance. Implications/suggestions related to the coursework, writing practices and future research have been presented.

Keywords: beliefs about writing, foreign language writing, writing performance, preservice English teachers, teacher training.

1. Introduction

Writing, the neglected skill of foreign language education, "today is not a frill for the few, but an essential skill for the many" (National Commission on Writing, 2003, p. 11). We require this skill to flourish as a student, as an employer and as a citizen because foreign language writing is one of the critical components of academic foundation that students need, an essential prerequisite in the workplace and a critical requirement to be active citizens of a globalizing world. Therefore, this skill becomes valuable for different groups including preservice teachers of English who are potential teachers of all other groups. This assumption has motivated the researcher to explore quite a lot about writing discipline, and its first and earlier practices in undergraduate composition classes. Following this perspective, domain-specific beliefs about writing have been chosen as the target focus in this study.

Social cognitive theory of Albert Bandura refers to the significant role of beliefs in human learning and performance (Bandura, 1989). Self-efficacy beliefs are one of them which are mainly related to a person's belief in oneself to perform tasks and reach particular goals (see Bandura (1997) for further reading). More than thirty years, research on participants from primary school children to university students have already reinforced the relationship between writing self-efficacy, writing apprehension and writing performance (e.g., McCarthy, Meier, & Rinderer, 1985; Meier, McCharty, & Schmeck, 1984; Pajares & Johnson, 1994; Pajares & Valiante, 1999; Prat-Sala & Redford, 2012; Tanyer, 2015). However, only recently,

the social cognitive view of writing has been extended via the concept of beliefs about writing which has been related to writing performance as well as writing self-efficacy and apprehension (i.e., Sanders-Reio, 2010; Sanders-Reio, Alexander, Reio, & Newman, 2014). This belief category (terminologically domain specific beliefs about writing) has been built on studies from the fields of educational psychology, writing and rhetoric, and concentrates on beliefs about what good writing is, what good writers do as well as the elements related to writing process itself.

The exploration of preservice English teachers' beliefs might be crucial in terms of various reasons. Firstly, it is possible for them to transmit their past as an element to learning environments of today and future. Therefore, if preservice teachers get promoted to reflect their own beliefs, they can construct or reconstruct their belief systems about writing. Moreover, beliefs about writing can be related to learners' writing performance as shown in the literature (e.g., Perry, 2011; Sanders-Reio, 2010; Sanders-Reio et al., 2014; White & Bruning, 2005). Also, like other foreign language skills such as speaking and listening, writing can be regarded as one of the neglected skills until university education. Probably because of this fact, this skill has been observed as a challenge for first-year preservice English teachers, and it would be worthy to discover what kinds of beliefs about writing are held by this specific group. In addition, while organizing a writing course in an EFL teacher-training program, there may be a need to learn future teachers' beliefs about a specific domain that they would teach in the future which is "writing" in this study. Identifying their personal beliefs and the additional details about these beliefs in depth by means of valid and reliable instruments might present valuable implications for teaching writing skill in a teacher education program.

1.1. Literature review

This review presents a conceptual framework for the exploration of research on beliefs about writing as well as a summary and discussion of the studies conducted in this area. The topics related to the research on writing beliefs have been ranging from innateness of writing skill to role of audience, mechanical and substantive writing skills, specific models of writing beliefs as well as transmissional, transactional and domain specific beliefs about writing. The first topic of empirical studies about writing beliefs concentrates on the role of giftedness in writing ability. With 247 undergraduates, Palmquist and Young (1992) examined the relationship between the beliefs in the innateness of writing ability and four other variables that were writing apprehension, self-assessment of writing skills, the confidence in mastering writing skills and genres, and previous experience with writing teachers. According to the results, the belief in the innateness of writing skill might "contribute to these students' apprehension about writing" (Palmquist and Young, 1992, p.151). Also, the participants believing that writing skill was innate-gift tended to be less confident in their ability to become professional writers. The undergraduates carrying this belief also reported their experiences with their previous writing teachers less favorably. Therefore, Palmquist & Young (1992) concluded that the belief in innateness might provoke unprompted limitations about undergraduate courses and future careers which required writing skills.

From the same point of view, Charney, Newman & Palmquist (1995) added one different variable that was writing performance, and investigated the relationship between beliefs about the innateness of writing ability, students' assessments about their own writing, writing apprehension and writing performance of 446 undergraduate students. The findings revealed that participants believing that writing could be learned were more likely to enjoy writing although they did not accordingly score higher on their writing assignments. Also, participants enjoying writing more tended to label themselves as good writers, and the female participants were prone to regard writing skill as something that could be learned. In addition,

they enjoyed writing more, and scored higher in writing assignments than the male ones. As suggested by the two studies above, the belief in giftedness might have prejudicial effects on student writers and trigger limitations in writing career (Palmquist & Young, 1992). Therefore, it would be valuable to question this belief in that writing lecturers may need to become aware of it and combat its negative effects.

Another perspective in beliefs about writing research deals with the role of audience in writing process. The analysis of audience is an important element of planning process because it decides the format, the language, the information included, and even the use of figures and graphics. In this regard, Nelson (2008) indicated the role and importance of audience and addressed three issues that were “writing related to reading, writer related to reader, and text related to text” regarding them as central to written discourse (p. 547). Her study revealed that the participants considered readers and writers interacting in a bilateral aim instead of isolated existences. It was indicated that the products of writers varied according to the different types of audience by means of an adaptation process. Nelson also noted the evidence of developmental differences between younger and older students.

The four other researchers, Miller and Chorney (2008) and Beach and Friedrich (2006), focused on three main dimensions of writing that are persuasion, audience and argument, and discussed how writers adapted the organization, content, tone of their arguments according to target audience, their age, their assumed attitudes, and to the specific discourse community. Also, emphasizing the significance and pervasiveness of writing in the workplace, Beaufort (2008) researched how writers in workplace adapted their voice, tone, level of clarity, and stated that the writers had decided on their choice of words in response to the power groups. As claimed by Miller and Charney (2008), the notion of influencing and persuading readers has been emphasized since Aristotle. However, in school environment, the written products that students produce may not address a real aim or a real audience. For this reason, it can be valuable to question students’ beliefs about this inauthenticity and the role of audience in a foreign language environment.

Mechanical and substantive skills are two other components of writing skill which address different issues: while mechanical skills are interested in grammar, spelling, punctuation and style; substantive skills attend to organization, development, clarity, and cohesion. The differences between these two skill types can be observable in research. In their study of how students’ beliefs about writing affect the product and writing process, Graham, Schwartz & MacArthur (1993) made a distinction between mechanical and substantive skills. Via open-ended interviews, the 4th, 5th, 7th and 8th grade students with and without learning disabilities were asked about their beliefs and knowledge with respect to what good writing was, what good writers did, why some students had trouble in writing, and how they would write a paper for a younger child. The participants were also asked to evaluate a text written by a child by employing their knowledge and beliefs about writing. The findings revealed that the better writers who were also older and normally achieving students tended to highlight substantive skills instead of mechanical skills in their definitions of good writing. In their accounts of who good writers were and what they did, these participants emphasized writing processes over written product. To sum up, Graham, Schwartz & MacArthur (1993) claimed that “The knowledge, attitudes, and beliefs that students hold about writing play an important part in determining how the composing process is carried out and what the eventual shape of the written product will be” (p.246). As writing teachers, if we uncover the students’ beliefs about mechanical and substantive issues, these beliefs might be (re)shaped by writing instruction that they would receive.

Some scholars have also started to develop models on beliefs about writing combining different variables. The earlier empirical study of beliefs about writing has been published by

Silva and Nicholls (1993) who designed their scales based on six traditions of discourse theory. Based on these traditions, Silva and Nicholls included some goals and beliefs in two different scales (i.e., “Writing Goals” and “Beliefs about the Causes of Success in Writing”). They also applied three more scales that were “Intrinsic Commitment to Writing”, “Dualism Scale” and “Perceived Ability Scale”. The results revealed that students with beliefs referring to substantive issues liked writing more than the ones holding beliefs stressing “Surface Correctness and Form”. Silva & Nicholls (1993) also stated that beliefs about writing might reflect writing teachers’ styles and classroom culture. Therefore, as in the Bandura’s model, the effect of environment on the person could be observed in writing classrooms, as well.

In addition to those above, Ellen Lavelle has published a number of studies about students’ approaches to writing (e.g., Lavelle, 1993, 2001, 2003; Lavelle & Guarino, 2003; Lavelle, Smith & O’Ryan, 2002; Lavelle & Zuercher, 2001). She started her research by developing a questionnaire, The Inventory of Processes in College Composition (IPCC; Lavelle, 1993), a factor analysis of which has provided five different writing approaches of college students: *Elaborationist Approach*, *Low Self-Efficacy Approach*, *Reflective-Revisionist Approach*, *Impulsive Approach* and *Procedural Approach*. Those five approaches were collected under two broad categories as deep and surface approaches (Lavelle & Guarino, 2003). Writers taking a deep approach are more meta-cognitive, more involved in their writing and regard themselves as a real operator in meaning making. These writers tell a strong sense of audience, carry holistic views of writing tasks, and they are directed more toward meaning of the written product than form. For them, revision is an important part of writing process, and they tend to revise and reflect thoroughly on their product. Writers taking the surface approach are less aware of writing process and audience, and they are less dedicated to their written product. Writing is not a learning source for them; they are more rule-bound, focus on mechanical errors in writing, and instead of revising, they edit their work at the surface level.

As well as the models mentioned above, White and Bruning (2005) adapted the earlier works of Schraw and Bruning (1996, 1999) to writing which investigated transmissional and transactional beliefs about reading. According to the new model, writers with high transmissional beliefs see writing principally as a channel of transmitting authoritative knowledge to readers with minimum addition of writer’s own perspective while writers with high transactional beliefs view writing as a medium to combine what they have learned with their own knowledge and perspectives. In order to measure transmissional and transactional beliefs about writing, White and Bruning (2005) developed the Writing Beliefs Inventory and examined the relations among 170 undergraduates’ beliefs about writing, writing self-efficacy, writing apprehension, past writing experiences and writing performance. The results indicated that beliefs about writing were related to writing performance because the participants with transmissional beliefs had significantly lower writing scores while those with transactional beliefs had higher writing scores. Students with high transmissional scores also had less affective and cognitive engagement with writing and were less likely to write for pleasure. On the other hand, students with high transactional scores spent more time for writing and were more likely to find writing pleasurable.

More recently, Bruning, Dempsey, Kauffman & Zumbrunn (2011) extended the work of White and Bruning (2005) by revising Writing Beliefs Inventory and surveyed 556 eleventh graders from two high schools to investigate the relationship among implicit beliefs about writing, affects towards writing, writing self-efficacy, writing grades and statewide writing assessment scores as well as English/Language Arts course enrollment. Results demonstrated that transactional beliefs were significantly related to liking writing, self-efficacy for writing ideation, self-efficacy for writing conventions, self-efficacy for writing self-regulation, self-reported grades, and the statewide writing assessment score. Also, students in more advanced

classes of English/Language Arts course had higher transactional beliefs and lower transmissional beliefs. Following that study, Perry (2011) investigated 153 college students' implicit beliefs about a specific writing task and associations of those beliefs to writing score with the measures of "Writing Habits and Beliefs Scale", "Writing Beliefs Inventory-Revised" (Bruning et al., 2011), "Liking Writing Scale" and "Beliefs about Intelligence" scale. Results revealed that college students held implicit beliefs about the specific writing task and those beliefs were related to liking writing and beliefs about intelligence. However, transmissional and transactional beliefs did not affect scores of writing task. All in all, this study indicated that learners approached "writing with a unique set of beliefs, assumptions, and motivations", and they entered "the classroom with a wide variety of skill sets, experiences, and prior knowledge" (Perry, 2011, p.96).

Referring to a scarcity, Sanders-Reio (2010) indicated that while investigation on writing self-efficacy beliefs and its relation to writing apprehension and writing performance had started to become accumulated, the research area of beliefs about writing was limited. Therefore, she examined the association between domain specific beliefs about writing, writing self-efficacy and writing apprehension, and their relations to writing performance on a three-phase study. The first two phases were assigned to instrument construction and validation while the last phase investigated the relations among the target variables. The participants were 207 pre-service teachers studying in the College of Education, and the measures were "Beliefs about Writing Survey", the modified "Writing Self-Efficacy Scale" (Zimmerman and Bandura, 1994), the modified "Writing Apprehension Test" (Daly and Miller, 1975), and a demographic survey. Writing performance of the preservice teachers was assessed via a structured five-page paper written for the educational psychology course.

The results revealed that four of the beliefs about writing – *Expert Orientation*, *Writing Supports Thinking*, *Address Substantive Issues First* and *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* - appeared to be adaptive in that they positively correlated with all or some of the grades for writing performance or with other adaptive beliefs. *Expert Orientation* also correlated positively with writing self-efficacy and enjoyment for writing while *Writing Support Thinking* had the highest correlation to enjoyment of writing. Hierarchical regression analysis revealed that beliefs about writing independently explained 12% of the variance in writing performance. Apprehension about making grammatical and other mechanical errors had a strong negative effect on writing performance. Lastly, after controlling for domain specific writing beliefs, writing self-efficacy weakly predicted writing performance.

A following study of Sanders-Reio et al. (2014) also followed Kellogg's (2008) cognitive model of writing development and investigated the relations among beliefs about writing, writing self-efficacy, writing apprehension and writing performance. "The Beliefs About Writing Survey", "the Writing Self-Efficacy Index" and the modified "Writing Apprehension Test" were administered to a total of 738 undergraduates, and writing performance was evaluated based on a class paper. According to the findings, beliefs about writing accounted for writing scores significantly and, while the beliefs, *Audience Orientation* and *Recursive Process*, were the positive predictors of the scores, *Transmission* and *Transaction* were the negative predictors. As for the other variables, the writing self-efficacy positively and apprehension about grammar negatively predicted writing performance while writing apprehension as a block was not a significant predictor.

More recently, Tanyer & Subaşı (2016) conducted a qualitative study and investigated 26 preservice English teachers' beliefs about EFL writing via interviews. In the study, the participants' beliefs about good writing and writers, writing ability and the factors affecting their beliefs about good writing were interrogated. As a result, it was found that participants approached good writing and writer characteristics and the nature of writing ability with

particular belief sets. The scholars also interpreted their findings according to the writing scores gathered by the participants. Based on these interpretations, they claimed that the relationship between writing beliefs and writing performance had been reinforced by their study.

All in all, the findings above support the possibility that writing beliefs can be an influential variable while teaching writing skill. Following the research above dealing with domain-specific beliefs about writing, the present study has two main purposes. Firstly, it aims at investigating first year undergraduates' domain-specific beliefs about writing. Secondly, it questions the role of these beliefs in undergraduates' writing performance. In line with these purposes, it has been assumed that this study would provide a profile of preservice English teachers by reporting their beliefs about what good writing is, what good writers do in addition to the writing processes, writing tasks, writing skills and the procedures these tasks and skills involve. The research questions guiding the study are as follows:

RQ1. Do preservice English teachers hold any domain specific beliefs about writing?

RQ2. Is there any relationship between domain specific beliefs about writing and writing performance?

RQ3. Do domain specific beliefs about writing predict writing performance?

2. Methodology

2.1. Participants

The participants included 147 first-year preservice teachers studying in the ELT Department of a Turkish university. In this department, students must take two main writing courses in their first year (i.e. Written Communication and Academic Writing and Report Writing). In this study, the ones from all eight sections of "Academic Writing and Report Writing Course" participated. Each section of that course comprised almost 30 students; however, the ones that had failed in previous years and retook the course were excluded from the analysis. Most of the participants were female with the proportion of 74.8% ($N=110$), while 25.2% of them were male ($N=37$). Additionally, the average age of them was 19.69 ($SD= 2.12$).

There are several reasons for the selection of this population of interest in this research. Firstly, they receive considerable amount of practice and instruction in writing through two semesters, so learning more about them and undergraduate writing might facilitate the development of writing instruction for this sample. The second reason is that the participation of this sample would facilitate comparison with and the extension of much of the existing research (e.g., Bruning et. al., 2011; Sanders-Reio, 2010; Sanders-Reio et al., 2014; White & Bruning, 2005) about pre-service teachers' domain specific beliefs about writing.

2.2. Instruments

In the present study, two data sources were combined which were a recent survey of beliefs about writing and writing scores. The survey administered and measurement of writing performance have been described below.

2.2.1. Survey

The participants indicated their domain-specific beliefs about foreign language writing on a five-point likert scale which was The Beliefs about Writing Scale (BAWS; Sanders-Reio, 2010). BAWS had specifically been designed with Hispanic first-year preservice teachers who were enrolled in College of Education in south Florida, USA. The original BAWS comprised 76 items with 14 subscales, although a four subscales-version of it have recently

been developed and used by Sanders-Reio et al. (2014). In the current study, the first version with 76 items and 14 subscales were administered.

Beyond the beliefs about foreign language writing, the survey battery also asked participants to provide relevant background information about themselves such as their age, gender and year of study. The respondents were also required to reveal some more details such as their attitudes toward foreign language writing and their past educational experiences. Some items of the instrument theorized to be vague for the first-year preservice teachers were disambiguated with their synonyms or with some examples. Moreover, three writing instructors all of whom were experts in ELT and lecturing in ELT Department reviewed the survey battery and approved the modifications. The comparison between the initial and modified version of the items have been listed in Table 1:

Table 1. *The original and modified version of five items of BAWS*

Original	Modified
9. It's important to develop a distinctive writing style.	9. It's important to develop a distinctive (<i>peculiar, original</i>) writing style.
19. Writers need to immerse themselves in their writing.	19. Writers need to immerse themselves in (<i>involve deeply in</i>) their writing.
39. Papers with typos are terrible embarrassment.	39. Papers with typos (<i>misspellings</i>) are terrible embarrassment.
45. During revision, one should carefully check one's manuscripts for both substantive and mechanical problems.	45. During revision, one should carefully check one's manuscripts for both substantive (<i>organization, development etc.</i>) and mechanical (<i>grammar, spelling etc.</i>) problems.
46. Good writers demonstrate their skills at crafting complex sentences.	46. Good writers demonstrate their skills at crafting (<i>creating</i>) complex sentences.
69. It's humiliating to give a PowerPoint presentation with typos and misspellings.	69. It's humiliating to give <i>an essay</i> with typos and misspellings.

2.2.2. Writing Performance

Writing performance was assessed via the grades participant received on the papers they wrote for the Academic Writing and Report Writing Course. During an in-class exam, the students were provided with three optional writing prompts and were free to choose any of them for essay writing. Also, based on their topic, they were supposed to decide the genre type which they would write in using APA citation techniques appropriately. The papers were assessed analytically via ESL Composition Profile of Jacobs, Hartfield, Hughey and Vormuth (1981) which includes five main rows: Content, Organization, Vocabulary, Language Use, and Mechanics. As Andrade & Boulay (2003) have argued, using such profile for assessment can support learning and development of writing skills by laying out clear, concrete characteristics of good writing.

2.3. Data Collection and Analysis Procedures

2.3.1. The Survey

At the beginning of spring semester, randomly selected thirty-two (32) preservice teachers studying in ELT Department firstly indicated their domain specific beliefs about foreign language writing via BAWS. The purpose of applying this instrument to that small group was to discover whether the items were clear and definite for the respondents. As no negative feedback was received and there had been no additional modification on the survey, the data

gathered from this quite small sample were combined with the main study. Thus, a total of 147 participants answered the survey battery in a class hour.

The ELT Department demands their candidates to be at B2 level according to the standard language levels of Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) while accepting them to the department. This level was assumed to be appropriate for preservice teachers to comprehend the items of the BAWS by the faculty members. For this reason, the original English version of the survey was applied during the data collection process. Furthermore, the preservice teachers were demanded to approve their voluntarily participation to complete the survey package by signing a consent form. In that consent form, the participants were enlightened about the purpose of the research and asked for their permission.

2.3.2. Writing Performance

As for the writing performance, the participants' first midterm exam scores were taken into consideration. During an in-class exam, the preservice teachers wrote their own essays. In the exam paper, the students were provided with three optional writing prompts and were free to choose any of them. Also, based on their topic, they were supposed to decide the genre type they would write.

2.3.3. Data Analysis

A number of statistical calculations have been performed in order to address the research questions. For RQ1 (i.e., Do preservice English teachers hold any domain specific beliefs about writing?), descriptive statistics such as means and standard deviations were used. For RQ2 (i.e. What is the relation between beliefs about writing and writing performance?), the Pearson correlations were computed and analyzed between the independent (beliefs about writing) and dependent (writing performance) variables. To answer RQ3 (i.e. Do domain specific beliefs about writing predict writing performance?), a standard multiple regression analysis was employed to determine the unique variance explained by beliefs about writing in writing performance.

3. Results

In the following headings, reliability of measures, descriptive statistics, and the findings of correlational and standard multiple regression analyses have been presented.

3.1. Reliability of measures

To assure that the Beliefs about Writing Scale (BAWS) was a reliable measure, internal consistency of measures was used by computing the Cronbach's alphas for the total scale and all subscales (see Table 2). The Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was .855, which was close to the entire value of original BAWS (i.e. 0.87; Sanders-Reio, 2010, p. 116). The Cronbach's alphas for the fourteen subscales of BAWS ranged from .524 to .797, which had ranged from .61 to .80 in the original scale. As eliminating any items did not provide higher reliability, none of the items had been removed from the scale.

Table 2. *Reliability coefficients for BAWS and its subscales*

	N of items	Cronbach's α
1. Transmissional	6	.569
2. Writing Supports Thinking	4	.797
3. Writing Is a Personal and Emotional Experience	6	.653
4. Writing Is an Innate Gift	5	.762
5. Basics (Mechanics) First	4	.578

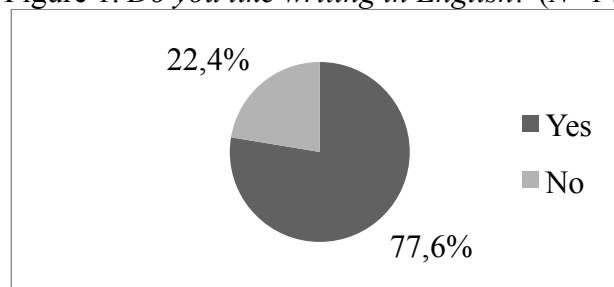
6. Address Substantive Issues First	5	.524
7. Writing Is an Iterative Process	8	.597
8. Minimize Revision	7	.604
9. Write to Impress	4	.609
10. Use Plain English	6	.638
11. Adapt to the Audience	8	.664
12. Clarity Is Essential	3	.532
13. Development Is Important	5	.589
14. Mechanical Errors Are Shameful	5	.778
Beliefs about Writing Survey (TOTAL)	76	.855

Writing performance was assessed via the scores participants received on the essays they wrote for the first midterm exam on three optional topics. As for the reliability of writing scores, two graders each of whom were experienced instructors of writing and had been lecturing for at least fifteen years evaluated the participants' papers following the dimensions of ESL Composition Profile (Jacobs et. al., 1981). The mean of the two graders' scores was used in the study. Based on these two score sets, a correlational analysis was operated in order to calculate the inter-rater reliability as instructed by Gay (1992). The correlation value between the total scores given by the two scorers was .94.

3.2. Descriptive statistics

The values below demonstrate descriptive statistics about the participants' profile, past educational and writing experiences in addition to means and standard deviations of the subscales.

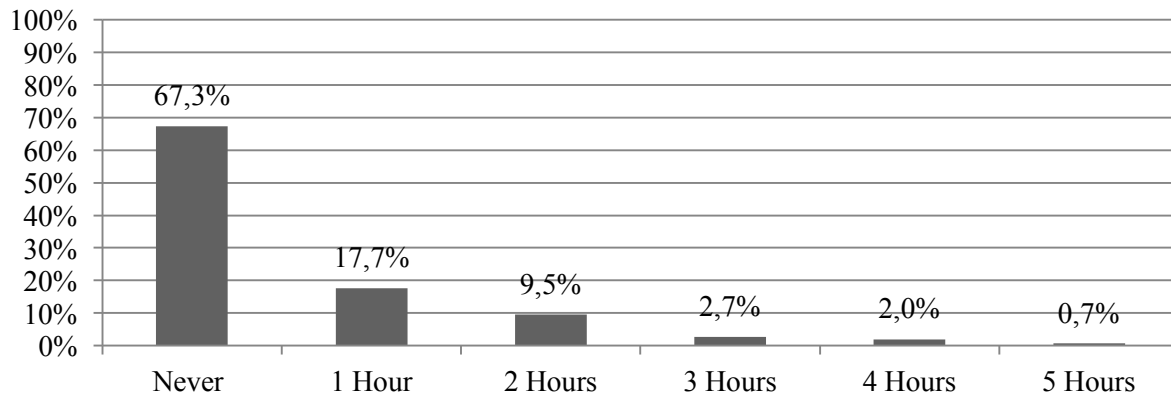
Figure 1. *Do you like writing in English?* (N=147)



The first question, *Do you like writing in English?*, inquired participants' attitudes toward foreign language writing. As revealed by Figure 1, most of the students (77.6%) seem to have developed a positive attitude toward writing in English, while the rest 22.4% of them reported that they did not like writing in English.

The remaining open-ended questions provided us some more details about the participants' past writing practices in English. For example, the hours of English courses they took in a week during high school ranged from 2 to 14 hours with a mean of 10.71. But, when the course hours allocated for foreign language writing was searched, it was indicated that 67.3% of the participants (N=99) had not done any practices of writing in English at high school (see Figure 2 below). The time allocated for writing practice for the rest of the participants was also quite limited varying between one (1) and five (5) hours with a decreasing proportion from 17.7% to 0.7% respectively.

Figure 2. *How many hours of English courses in a week were allocated to improve your writing skills at high school? (N=147).*



In Table 3, the means and standard deviations of the fourteen (14) subscales in BAWS were demonstrated. The subscales were ordered in a descending order from the one with the highest average to the one with the lowest average.

Table 3. *Means and standard deviations of the subscales in BAWS (N=147)*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Development Is Important	4,125	0,424
2. Clarity Is Essential	4,063	0,571
3. Writing Supports Thinking	4,056	0,663
4. Adapt to the Audience	3,996	0,437
5. Writing Is an Iterative Process	3,938	0,427
6. Writing Is a Personal and Emotional Experience	3,818	0,524
7. Address Substantive Issues First	3,693	0,574
8. Writing Is an Innate Gift	3,449	0,805
9. Basics (Mechanics) First	3,449	0,635
10. Use Plain English	3,353	0,554
11. Write to Impress	3,258	0,727
12. Transactional	2,997	0,584
13. Mechanical Errors Are Shameful	2,851	0,793
14. Minimize Revision	2,409	0,524

As presented in Table 3, the beliefs that were *Development Is Important*, *Clarity Is Essential* and *Writing Supports Thinking* had the highest means while the beliefs, *Transactional*, *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* and *Minimize Revision*, had the lowest mean scores. The other eight belief categories about writing were in between these two outlier sets. Descriptive statistics showed that the upper three beliefs were highly agreed by the participants; on the contrary, the last three beliefs seemed to be disagreed.

In Table 4 (below), the results of one-sample t-test that had compared the averages of each subscale with the middle value (i.e. 3) were presented. Among the subscales which were agreed, the highest average belonged to the belief, *Development Is Important* ($M= 4.125$), while the lowest average belonged to the belief that writers should *Write To Impress* the audience ($M= 3.258$). Although the lowest average had a mean of 3,258, this value was higher than the middle value (i.e., 3) with a t-value of 4.307 and a probability value of .000.

Therefore, it was found that the participants agreed all the first eleven (11) beliefs about writing listed below.

Table 4. Summaries of one-sample t-test comparing the averages of variables with the middle value of the likert scale (i.e. 3) (N=147)

Variable	Mean	SD	t	df	p <
1. Development Is Important	4,125	0,424	32.120	146	.000
2. Clarity Is Essential	4,063	0,571	22.575	146	.000
3. Writing Supports Thinking	4,056	0,663	19.288	146	.000
4. Adapt to the Audience	3,996	0,437	27.639	146	.000
5. Writing Is an Iterative Process	3,938	0,427	26.632	146	.000
6. Writing Is a Personal and Emotional Experience	3,818	0,524	18.910	146	.000
7. Address Substantive Issues First	3,693	0,574	14.656	146	.000
8. Writing Is an Innate Gift	3,449	0,805	6.757	146	.000
9. Basics (Mechanics) First	3,449	0,635	8.564	146	.000
10. Use Plain English	3,353	0,554	7.731	146	.000
11. Write to Impress	3,258	0,727	4.307	146	.000
12. Transmissional	2,997	0,584	-.047	146	.963
13. Mechanical Errors Are Shameful	2,851	0,793	-2.265	146	.025
14. Minimize Revision	2,409	0,524	-13.668	146	.000

On the other hand, the last two beliefs were significantly disagreed which were *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* ($M=2.851$) and writers should *Minimize Revision* ($M=2.409$) whose means were lower than the middle value (i.e. 3) with t-values of (-2.265) and (-13.668) respectively. Also, they had probability values of (.025) and (.000) which were lower than .05. Therefore, it was apparent that respondents disagreed with these beliefs. The last belief, *Transmissional* ($M=2.997$), was not agreed or disagreed by the subjects. In other words, they were unsure about this belief since the mean of it was so close to the middle value of the scale (i.e. 3). Additionally, it had a very low t-value (-.047) and the probability value of it (i.e., .963) was not lower than .05. In this regard, the pre-service English teachers participating in the present study were found to be unsure about the *Transmissional* belief category.

3.3. Correlations

In order to answer Research Question 2 (i.e. Is there any relationship between beliefs about writing and writing performance?), Pearson correlations among dependent variables (i.e. the subscales of the BAWS), and the Pearson correlations between the dependent variables and the independent variable (i.e. writing performance) were computed.

3.3.1. Correlations Among the Subscales of the BAWS

Firstly, the correlational values among the dependent variables have been reported, and the correlation matrix in Table 5 signified that a number of subscales had been statistically significantly correlated among each other and with writing performance. Some previous studies have theorized (e.g., White & Bruning, 2005; Sanders-Reio, 2010) that beliefs about writing can be adaptive since “they either reflect expert practice, support writing process, and/or tend to be as associated with better grades on writing assignment” (p.151). The belief categories theorized to be adaptive were: 1) *Adapt to the Audience*, 2) *Clarity Is Essential*, 3) *Development Is Important*, 4) *Writing Is An Iterative Process*, 5) *Use Plain English*, 6) *Substantive Issues First*, 7) *Writing Supports Thinking* and 8) *Writing Is A Personal and Emotional Experience*.

In the current study, *Adapt To The Audience* significantly and positively correlated with all of the theorized adaptive beliefs. This means that preservice teachers believing that writing should be adapted to the audience were more likely to believe that *Development Is Important* ($r = .56, p < .01$), *Clarity Is Essential* ($r = .54, p < .01$), *Writing Is An Iterative Process* ($r = .47, p < .01$), *Writing Supports Thinking* ($r = .31, p < .01$), foreign language writers should *Use Plain English* ($r = .29, p < .01$), *Writing Is A Personal and Emotional Experience* ($r = .26, p < .01$) and that writers should *Address Substantive Issues First* ($r = .24, p < .01$). To the contrary, first-year preservice teachers subscribing to the belief, *Adapt To The Audience*, were more likely to hold three of the maladaptive beliefs which were *Basics (Mechanics) First* ($r = .303, p < .01$), *Transmissional* ($r = .24, p < .01$), and *Write to Impress* ($r = .20, p < .01$).

Second adaptive belief correlating significantly and positively with all theorized adaptive beliefs is *Development Is Important*. Therefore, those believing that writers should explain their thoughts effectively were more likely to believe that *Clarity Is Essential* ($r = .62, p < .01$), writers should *Adapt To The Audience* ($r = .56, p < .01$), *Writing Is An Iterative Process* ($r = .50, p < .01$), writers should *Use Plain English* ($r = .37, p < .01$), *Writing Is A Personal and Emotional Experience* ($r = .34, p < .01$), *Writing Supports Thinking* ($r = .31, p < .01$), and writers should *Address Substantive Issues First* ($r = .28, p < .01$). In contrast, participants subscribing to this belief (i.e., *Development Is Important*) were more likely to believe that writers should master *Basics (Mechanics) First* ($r = .38, p < .01$), and should *Write to Impress* ($r = .18, p < .01$) the reader.

The third writing belief subcategory theorized to be adaptive is *Clarity Is Essential*. According to the Table 5, the respondents believing that foreign language writers should convey information clearly were more inclined to believe that *Development Is Important* ($r = .56, p < .01$), writers should *Adapt To The Audience* ($r = .54, p < .01$), *Writing Supports Thinking* ($r = .39, p < .01$), *Writing Is An Iterative Process* ($r = .39, p < .01$), writers should *Use Plain English* ($r = .34, p < .01$), *Writing Is A Personal and Emotional Experience* ($r = .31, p < .01$), and that writers should *Address Substantive Issues First* ($r = .28, p < .01$). On the contrary, the subjects believing that *Clarity Is Essential* were more likely to believe that writers should master *Basics (Mechanics) First* ($r = .30, p < .01$) and should transmit authorities' words into their writing (*Transmissional*, $r = .23, p < .01$).

Five beliefs about writing that are *Transmissional*, *Write to Impress*, *Minimize Revision*, *Writing Is An Innate Gift* and *Basics (Mechanics) First* are theorized to be maladaptive for they contradict with "expert writing practice" and have a tendency to link to lower scores on writing tasks (Sanders-Reio, 2010; p. 154). In the current study, three of these maladaptive beliefs, *Transmissional*, *Write to Impress* and *Basics (Mechanics) First*, correlated with other three maladaptive beliefs. The first one, *Transmissional*, positively and significantly correlated with *Write to Impress* ($r = .30, p < .01$), *Minimize Revision* ($r = .23, p < .01$) and *Basics (Mechanics) First* ($r = .18, p < .05$). This means that participants who regarded writing as a means of transmitting scholarly information to the audience with almost no contribution also believed that writers should *Write To Impress* and *Minimize Revision* while writing.

Minimize Revision supports the notion that writers write it appropriately in the first time and need no revision, and stands as a counterpoint to the concept of expert orientation, especially to the belief that *Writing Is An Iterative Process*. This belief correlated positively and significantly with the other beliefs theorized to be maladaptive including *Transmissional* ($r = .23, p < .01$), *Write To Impress* ($r = .20, p < .05$) and *Writing Is An Innate Gift* ($r = .19, p < .05$). As anticipated, it also significantly and negatively associated with *Writing Is an Iterative Process* ($r = .19, p < .05$). The belief, *Write to Impress*, which suggested that writers should use big words and attract their readers, was also correlated with the three beliefs.

Table 5. Intercorrelations among the subscales of beliefs about writing survey and writing performance

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14
1. Transmissional	--													
2. Writing Supports Thinking	.090	--												
3. Writing is a Personal Emotional Experience	.216**	.265**	--											
4. Writing is an Innate Gift	.107	-.164*	.136	--										
5. Basics (Mechanics) First	.186*	.130	.069	.156	--									
6. Address Substantive Issues First	-.016	.132	.244**	.047	-.208*	--								
7. Writing is an Iterative Process	.188*	.378**	.282**	-.057	.300**	.137	--							
8. Minimize Revision	.232**	-.131	.122	.194*	.048	.220**	-.192*	--						
9. Write to Impress	.303**	.128	.325**	.214**	.118	.081	.152	.205*	--					
10. Use Plain English	.234**	-.023	.102	.214**	.160	.204*	.273**	.077	-.069	--				
11. Adapt to the Audience	.244**	.313**	.268**	.051	.303**	.245**	.475**	-.025	.209*	.299**	--			
12. Clarity is Essential	.233**	.394**	.314**	.055	.309**	.284**	.391**	-.071	.147	.349**	.543**	--		
13. Development Is Important	.159	.315**	.349**	.100	.389**	.282**	.501**	-.077	.189*	.377**	.568**	.626**	--	
14. Mechanical Errors are Shameful	.159	-.018	-.011	.174*	.391**	-.234**	.000	.022	.217**	.106	.099	.032	.068	--
15. Overall Grade	-.085	.016	.053	-.135	-.022	.153	.170*	-.128	.026	.107	.269**	.136	.171*	.118

** Correlation is significant at $p < .01$. *Correlation is significant at $p < .05$.

theorized to be maladaptive that were *Transmissional* ($r = .30, p < .01$), *Writing Is An Innate Gift* ($r = .21, p < .01$) and *Minimize Revision* ($r = .20, p < .05$).

The other maladaptive belief, *Writing Is An Innate Gift*, was also positively and significantly correlated with *Minimize Revision* ($r = .19, p < .05$) and *Write To Impress* ($r = .21, p < .01$). In contrast, this belief also negatively associated with the belief of *Writing Supports Thinking* ($r = .16, p < .05$) which proposes that writing can help writers better understand what they think. An interesting result was that *Basics (Mechanics) First* correlated positively with only one maladaptive belief which was *Transmissional* ($r = .18, p < .05$) while correlating positively with four adaptive beliefs, in which the correlational values ranged from .30 to .38 ($p < .01$).

The last belief, *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful*, was not theorized as adaptive or maladaptive. In our study this belief correlated positively and significantly with three maladaptive beliefs including *Basics (Mechanics) First* ($r = .39, p < .01$), *Write To Impress* ($r = .21, p < .01$) and *Writing Is An Innate Gift* ($r = .17, p < .05$). It also negatively and significantly associated with *Address Substantive Issues First* ($r = .23, p < .01$) which had been theorized as an adaptive belief in the literature.

3.3.2. Correlations Between the Independent Variables and Writing Performance

One of the characteristics of adaptive beliefs is that they tend to match with higher scores on writing tasks (Sanders-Reio, 2010). As seen in Table 5, the belief that writers should *Adapt To The Audience* was significantly and positively correlated with overall writing performance ($r = .26, p < .01$), which proposes that those who put emphasis on audience-orientation were more probable to receive higher grades on their written work. In addition to the audience adaptation, the belief, *Development Is Important*, positively and significantly correlated with the overall grade ($r = .17, p < .05$). This result suggested that those believing that writers should present logical and convincing arguments were more likely to score higher just like the ones believing that audience-adaptation was significant. Lastly, the belief, *Writing Is An Iterative Process*, correlated positively with the overall score ($r = .17, p < .05$). These results indicated that students subscribing to the beliefs held by expert writers such as audience-orientation, presenting logical and convincing arguments as well as the ones viewing writing as a process of reviewing were inclined to have higher scores on their papers. On the other hand, although some beliefs such as *Minimize Revision* ($r = -.12, NS$), *Transmissional* ($r = -.85, NS$) and *Basics Mechanics First* ($r = -.02, NS$) negatively correlated with writing performance, these correlational values were quite low and not significant.

In sum, the exploration of the correlations between the beliefs about writing and overall writing performance justifies the view that some beliefs are prone to be adaptive while others are tendentious to be maladaptive although the correlational values were not statistically significant in our findings regarding the maladaptive beliefs.

3.4. Standard Multiple Regression

Standard multiple regression analysis was conducted to decide the variance in writing performance explained by domain specific beliefs about writing totally and individually. The prediction model summarized in Table 6 (below) was statistically significant $F(14,132) = 2.192, p < .05$ and accounted for approximately 18.9% of variance of writing score ($R^2 = .189, \text{Adjusted } R^2 = .103$). This value is fairly higher in comparison with Sanders-Reio's (2010) outcomes in which all beliefs about writing explained 11.8% of the variance ($p < .001$).

Table 6. *Standard multiple regression analysis results*

Model	<i>b</i>	<i>SE-b</i>	Beta	Pearson <i>r</i> (β)	<i>sr</i> ²	Structure Coefficient
Constant	41.167	14.484				
1. Transmissional	-3.331	2.016	-.150	-.085	.016	-.195
2. Writing Supports Thinking	-2.761	1.829	-.141	.016	.013	.036
3. Writing Personal and Emotional	.465	2.276	.019	.053	.000	.122
4. Writing Is an Innate Gift *	-2.843	1.403	-.176	-.135	.025	-.311
5. Basics (Mechanics) First	-2.738	2.114	-.134	-.022	.010	-.050
6. Substantive Issues First	2.630	2.213	.116	.153	.008	.352
7. Writing Is an Iterative Process	2.596	3.155	.085	.170	.004	.391
8. Minimize Revision	-2.160	2.294	-.087	-.128	.005	-.294
9. Write to Impress	.493	1.677	.028	.026	.000	.059
10. Use Plain English	.977	2.263	.042	.107	.001	.246
11. Mechanical Errors Are Shameful*	3.489	1.492	.213	.118	.033	.271
12. Development Is Important	.847	3.674	.028	.171	.000	.394
13. Clarity Is Essential	.336	2.578	.015	.136	.000	.313
14. Adapt to the Audience *	7.741	3.126	.260	.269	.037	.619

According to Table 6, writing scores were primarily predicted by the belief category of *Adapt to The Audience* ($\beta=.26, p<.05$), and to a lesser extent by two other subcategories, that were *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* ($\beta=.21, p<.05$) and *Writing Is An Innate Gift* ($\beta=-.17, p<.05$). Also, the raw and standardized regression coefficients of the predictors together with their correlations with the writing performance, their squared semi-partial correlations and their structure coefficients were shown in the table. The belief category, *Adapt To The Audience*, received the strongest weight in the model followed by *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* and *Writing Is An Innate Gift*. Overall, the model indicated that higher *Adapt To The Audience* and *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* scores predicted higher writing grades while the higher *Writing Is An Innate Gift* scores predicted lower writing grades in our research sample.

4. Discussion

This current research aimed to identify preservice English teachers' domain specific beliefs about writing and examine the relations between various writing beliefs and writing performance. The research literature on writing beliefs does not go far away in time. Moreover, it is limited and related to different samples and disciplines such as reading research (e.g., White & Burning, 2005), writing pedagogy (e.g., Silva & Nichols, 1993), early childhood and/or elementary teacher education (e.g., Graham, Schwartz & MacArthur, 1993). Only a recent study of Sanders-Reio (2010) focused specifically on writing processes and practices of expert writer candidates. Following her, the current study attempted to contribute to the literature on domain specific beliefs about writing applying the BAWs to the preservice English teachers.

One characteristic of adaptive beliefs was that they tended to match with higher scores on writing tasks (Sanders-Reio, 2010). According to our findings, the belief that writers should

Adapt To The Audience was significantly and positively correlated with overall writing performance. This proposed that those who put emphasis on audience-orientation were more probable to receive higher grades on their written work. In addition to the audience adaptation, the belief that *Development Is Important* positively and significantly correlated with the overall writing grade. This result suggested that the students who believed that writers should explain their thoughts and feelings effectively were more likely to score higher as were those who believed that audience-adaptation was crucial and had a significant role in writing process. Lastly, the belief, *Writing Is an Iterative Process*, correlated positively with the overall score. These results indicated that the students subscribing to the beliefs held by expert writers such as audience-orientation, effective essay development as well as the ones viewing writing as a process of reviewing were inclined to have higher scores on their papers.

These findings also support Sanders-Reio's (2010) and Sanders-Reio et al.'s (2014) outcomes in which audience-adaptation, attaching importance to development and viewing writing as an iterative process were the three of the beliefs held by expert writers and contributed positively to the writing performance. On the other hand, although some beliefs such as *Minimize Revision*, *Transmissional* and *Basics (Mechanics) First* negatively correlated with writing performance in our outcomes, these correlational values were not significant and were quite low. Two of these beliefs that were *Minimize Revision* and *Transmissional* had been negatively and significantly correlated with writing performance and found maladaptive in previous studies as well (e.g. Sanders-Reio, 2010; Sanders-Reio et al., 2015; White & Bruning, 2005). This means that some beliefs about writing tend to be the negative predictors of writing performance even in different research contexts.

Nevertheless, the findings of the study did not support one of the outcomes of White and Bruning (2005). The *Transactional* belief that had originated from the research on reading and claimed that writers were supposed to be interested in their writing both emotionally and cognitively were divided into two different subscales in Sanders-Reio's (2010) newly developed BAWS. These divided subscales were *Writing Supports Thinking* and *Writing Is A Personal and Emotional Experience*. Despite effecting writing performance positively and significantly in the research of White and Bruning (2005), both beliefs did not have any significant effect on writing performance in the current study. This can mean that our students do not regard writing as a mirror on which they can watch and evaluate their own ideas and/or they do not need to immerse themselves deeply and/or develop a distinctive writing style to become a good writer. One of the underlying reasons for this finding can be preservice teachers' short-term interaction with foreign language writing. However, our results confirmed the findings of Burning et. al. (2011) in which both *Transmissional* and *Transactional* beliefs did not affect the scores on writing, and did not support the findings of Sanders-Reio et al.'s (2014) in which *Transmission* and *Transaction* was the significant negative predictors of writing performance.

As researchers and teacher trainers, we are pleased to find out that the mean scores of preservice teachers in the ELT department were quite high for the three adaptive beliefs. The first one, *Development Is Important*, has the highest mean score among all others which is followed by *Adapt To The Audience* and *Writing Is An Iterative Process* in the fourth and fifth order respectively (See Table 3). So, it can be said that the first-year preservice teachers tend to implement the requirements of becoming an expert writer. As it is known that majority of the participants (i.e., 67.3%, see Figure 2) have never practiced foreign language writing, the writing classes and its components at university will be the first environment in which the teacher candidates can shape their beliefs about foreign language writing. Therefore, as teacher trainers, we should benefit from these beliefs of students as much as possible.

According to the standard multiple regression, all beliefs about writing accounted for approximately 19% of variance of writing score. This value is higher in comparison with Sanders-Reio's (2010) and Sanders-Reio et al.'s (2014) outcomes in which the all beliefs about writing explained 11.8% and 8.4% of the variance in writing scores respectively. Writing score was primarily predicted by the belief category that was *Adapt To The Audience*, and to a lesser extent by two other subcategories, that were *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* and *Writing Is An Innate Gift*. On one level, the outcome of present study supports the findings reported in Sanders-Reio (2010) and Sanders-Reio et al. (2014) since the belief category, *Adapt To The Audience*, was positive predictor of writing performance in those two studies. The findings of the study also revealed that the most adaptive variable in this research was the belief, *Adapt To The Audience*, because it was the only belief category that both positively correlated with writing grades and explained statistically significant amount of variance in the writing scores. It was also positively correlated with other variables related to good writing that were *Development Is Important* and *Writing Is an Iterative Process*, which strengthens the level of adaptiveness of it. The other supporting point for this adaptiveness was that this belief also positively and significantly correlated with *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful*, which is one of the adaptive beliefs according to our findings.

There is one more issue that needs to be discussed related to these quantitative data. As stated above, *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* is one of the adaptive beliefs since this belief explained the variance in the writing scores. As proposed by Sanders-Reio (2010), finding this belief as adaptive is quite unexpected since "shame is a negative emotion" (p. 201). It has been argued that the preservice teachers' capacity of using writing mechanics might be an effective factor for this issue. For instance, this belief "may motivate students with moderate mechanical skills to" overuse these skills "not to be shamed", or it may cause preservice teachers having weak mechanical skills stay away from "writing and facing the shame associated with" this writing component (p.201). Besides, this belief might associate with higher grades of the participants due to their writing instructors' evaluation and scoring criteria. From a different point of view, regarding mechanical errors as shameful might have resulted in dealing with this issue successfully without no excuse for the preservice teachers because most of our participants did not strongly believe that *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* ($M=2.851$) with a t -value of -2.265 although it significantly and positively contributed to the total writing score. Also, some writing mechanics such as punctuation rules can be believed to be a requirement for good foreign language writing, which may shed light on why the belief that *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* explained approximately 2% of the variance in writing score. When participants were asked what they did with their draft before it was subscribed to their teachers (see Tanyer, 2014; 2017), they stated that they checked both their grammar and other writing mechanics such as typos, spelling and punctuation. All these findings may be one of the explanations of why the belief *Mechanical Errors are Shameful* had been found as an adaptive belief and contributed positively to writing scores in the present study.

As a result of the analysis of data from the survey, the belief, *Adapt To The Audience*, was found as an adaptive belief. This finding was also supported with the interview results in Tanyer & Subaşı (2016). In that study, the nineteen percent (19%) of preservice teachers believed that good foreign language writing aimed to address and impress audience. The same beliefs were also discovered to be one of good writer characteristics because, according to the interviewees, good writers should be aware of their audience (46%). In the same study, also, the belief that *Development Is Important* was also confirmed both as a good property of foreign language writing (e.g., Developing good and creative ideas, 58%) and good foreign language writer (e.g., Producer of knowledgeable and convincing essays, 27%) with the

interview results. Moreover, the other adaptive belief, *Writing Is An Iterative Process*, also associated with the features of good writing and good writers by the participants. Therefore, it can be argued that the preservice teachers have started to discover and internalize expert writing orientations, which is a desirable and promising finding.

As stated above, two other beliefs, *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* and *Writing Is An Innate Gift*, explained writing performance individually according to our outcomes. The first one (i.e., *Mechanical Errors are Shameful*) was found adaptive, and this result was also supported with the interviews conducted in Tanyer & Subaşı (2016). 8% of the participants stated that good foreign language writing was required to be “accompanied with punctuations rules”, and all those respondents (100%) were high-achieving students. Moreover, 58% of the participants expressed that complex and correct sentences must be formed with advance grammar in good foreign language writing, and 67% of that group had also received higher scores in their writing exams. This means that interview results of Tanyer & Subaşı (2016) are in line with the survey results in terms of adaptiveness degree of the belief, *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful*.

The last belief, *Writing Is An Innate Gift*, was one of the maladaptive beliefs in the literature (e.g. Palmquist & Young, 1992; Charney, Newman & Palmquist, 1995; Sanders-Reio, 2010). According to our research sample, that belief had the capacity to negatively explain writing performance. This means that in line with the previous studies, the students in our sample who tended to view writing as an innate gift were likely to score lower in their writing exams, as well. This finding has also been supported with the interview results of Tanyer & Subaşı (2016). As for writing ability, 42% of teacher candidates viewed writing both as an innate talent and a skill that can be improved with appropriate instruction, teacher feedback and student effort. However, 39% of participants characterized writing skill only as an innate gift, which means that it is almost impossible to become a good writer no matter how a novice writer puts effort to success. Lastly, only 19% of teacher candidates viewed writing as a skill that could be developed via enough training and student attempt. Interestingly, 80% of the respondents who had regarded foreign language writing as an innate gift were low-achieving students while 60% of the interviewees who had viewed it as an improvable skill were high-achieving students. Moreover, 73% of the participants who regarded foreign language writing both as an innate gift and an improvable skill (42%) had received higher scores in their exams as well. All these interview findings have confirmed the maladaptive tendency of the belief, *Writing Is An Innate Gift*, for our sample, and they might be the explanation of why this belief was found as maladaptive in our current research environment.

5. Conclusion

Social cognitive theory anticipates that beliefs about writing are associated with success and failure. Within the scope of this theory, self-efficacy in writing and its association with apprehension and success in writing has been discussed in a number of research studies; however, research on domain specific beliefs about writing and its relation to writing performance has been limited. Therefore, the main purpose of the current study was to examine first-year preservice English teachers' beliefs about writing and the relation of these beliefs to writing performance in essay writing.

As for the relationship between beliefs about writing and writing performance, the findings indicated that the beliefs, *Adapt To The Audience*, *Development Is Important* and *Writing Is An Iterative Process*, were significantly and positively correlated with overall writing performance. According to this finding, those who put emphasis on audience-orientation, those who believe that writers should explain their thoughts and feelings

effectively and those who view writing as a process of reviewing and revising were more probable to receive higher grades on their written work. On the other hand, although three beliefs, *Minimize Revision*, *Transmissional* and *Basics Mechanics First*, negatively correlated with writing performance, these correlational values were not significant and were quite low. Overall, the first three beliefs mentioned above (i.e., *Adapt To The Audience*, *Development Is Important* and *Writing Is An Iterative Process*) were prone to be adaptive associating positively with writing performance while the others (i.e., *Minimize Revision*, *Transmissional* and *Basics Mechanics First*) were tendentious to become maladaptive although statistical values regarding the maladaptive ones were not significant in our sample.

As for the domain-specific beliefs about writing predicting writing performance, the findings revealed that all beliefs about writing as a block accounted for approximately 19% of variance of writing score ($p < .05$). Writing performance was primarily predicted by the belief category of *Adapt to The Audience*, and to a lesser extent by two other subcategories that were *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* and *Writing Is An Innate Gift*. While two of these beliefs (i.e., *Adapt to The Audience* and *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful*) accounted for approximately 3% and 2% of variance in total writing scores respectively, the belief, *Writing Is An Innate Gift*, explained 2% of variance in lower writing scores. Therefore, the findings indicated that higher *Adapt to The Audience* and *Mechanical Errors Are Shameful* belief scores predicted higher overall writing grades while the higher scores of the belief, *Writing Is An Innate Gift*, predicted the lower writing scores in our research environment.

5.1. Pedagogical Implications

The present study highlights the existence of preservice English teachers' domain specific beliefs about writing, and it concludes that domain-specific beliefs about writing are one of the influential factors of writing discipline and writing performance. As a training assistant, I could observe that "addressing course participants' beliefs about writing" would provide another road to "writing competence and to more positive and productive attitudes" toward this discipline (Sanders-Reio, 2010, p. 219). The results of this study indicated that all domain specific beliefs about writing explained 19% variance in writing grades. For this reason, in addition to personal classroom observations, the scholarly findings attribute value to writing beliefs while training preservice English teachers on how to write. That is why the probable implications that would be stated based on these findings can be essential for teacher educators.

Firstly, writing instructors can donate their undergraduate writers with particular strategies such as how to predict and respond to the questions of target audience and adapt their message to them because there are some writing components that need to be adapted according to the audience such as the format taken, the information included, and the language and graphics used. Furthermore, first-year novice writers may be trained for effective peer or individual revision and editing techniques that they can apply before submitting their drafts. As stated in the results, the beliefs associated with higher writing grades were mostly related to "expert writing guidelines and practices" (Sanders-Reio, 2010, p. 212). Moreover, one of the beliefs related to expert writing, *Writing Is An Iterative Process*, which advocates writing as a process of editing and revising, was discovered to be associated with high writing grades in our study. Based on this finding, it can be claimed that writing instructors should both observe, research and identify expert writers' practices both in academic and authentic contexts, and furnish their learners with these expert writer qualifications. It should be remembered that as confirmed by the study of Tanyer & Subaşı (2016; i.e., factors and people effecting beliefs about good writing), school environment and

its components (e.g., teachers, curriculum, feedback etc.) are the potential factors shaping beliefs about good writing.

All in all, the findings imply that beliefs about writing can be taken as a crucial leverage point for teaching writing. For this reason, writing instruction can be modified to “emphasize the mindsets and approaches associated with adaptive beliefs and minimize those related to maladaptive and ineffective beliefs.” (Sanders-Reio et al., 2014; p. 10). One way to achieve this can be giving homework or doing assignments which will inspire learners to focus on their readers’ characteristics and interests. Writing instruction can also help learners to present logical and convincing arguments because the belief, *Development Is Important*, has been labelled adaptive in nature by the participants. They can be presented with strategies to explain their opinions and findings effectively, to produce and convey qualified ideas, and to become logical and convincing of their own views.

5.2. Limitations

There are some points that need to be characterized as limited in the current study. Firstly, the Beliefs about Writing Survey adopted had originally been developed for the first-year preservice teachers in a second language environment although it was applied to the preservice English teachers in a foreign language context in Turkey. However, beliefs about writing can be specific to culture, writing instruction provided and learning context. Therefore, students’ beliefs can change based on these factors, or some other beliefs about writing can exist. To overcome these limitations, it is possible to replicate the study with different populations, or to discover other possible beliefs about writing and causal relations of them. Moreover, despite being persistent with some earlier research studies (e.g., Sanders-Reio, 2010; Sanders-Reio et al., 2014; Shell, Murphy, & Bruning, 1989), the methodology used to decide students’ writing performance has not reflected the possible variance in the long-term performance because only one grade received on an in-class exam paper was included in the study.

5.3. Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of this research may call the need for more examination of the variables by means of larger and more representative samples in Turkey. Therefore, some beliefs can be found as more or less adaptive or maladaptive in different learning environments of Turkish universities, or for different writing tasks. Moreover, possible effect of instructional and assessment procedures and writing expertise on beliefs about writing can be investigated via longitudinal studies. Finally, it has been theorized that “there is also a cognitive link mediated by the writer’s choice of strategies or a student’s openness to instruction in specific strategies” (Sanders-Reio, 2014; p. 10). For instance, learners may pay attention to instruction on how to revise only if they believe that successful writers also revise. Therefore, the possible relationship between beliefs about writing and readiness to instruction, and the effect of this relationship on writing performance can be investigated as a follow-up research study.

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