

## **Elimination of Writing Difficulty in Primary School: An Action Research\***

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### **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to develop applications for the elimination of writing difficulties of primary school second year students. For this purpose, the following questions will be answered: “What is the contribution of letter writing practices to the elimination of writing difficulties?”, “How does the practice of word writing contribute to the elimination of writing difficulties?”, “How does the practice of sentence writing contribute to the elimination of writing difficulties?”, “What is the contribution of text writing practices to the elimination of writing difficulties?”, “What is the persistence of the applications to eliminate writing difficulties?” In this research, qualitative model and action research design were used. The participants of this research were consisted of 6 students who were found to have writing problems among the second grade students. In the study, “Repeated Dictation and Motivation Practices” were used to eliminate the writing difficulties of the participants. Multidimensional Legibility Scale was used for data collection tool before and after the applications. When the findings of the study are taken into consideration, there is a positive increase in the elimination of the writing difficulties of the participants. It can be said that the Repeated Dictation and Motivation Practices applied in the study were successful. The practice of dictation which is used in practice is carried out repeatedly in terms of letters, words, sentences and text, and the contribution of the study group to the elimination of writing difficulties is significant. We can say that the motivation studies conducted during the research support the elimination of the writing difficulties of the students. One-to-one interviews with the students, motivating them continuously and receiving family support are also important factors for success.

**Keywords:** Writing difficulty, repeated dictation, motivation

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## INTRODUCTION

Writing includes all knowledge, skills and experience of individuals; it is a skill in which mental processes are employed (Walker, Shippen, Alberto, Houchins and Cihak, 2005). Writing skills not only provide a significant benefit to the communication between individuals but also allowing individuals to learn (Belet and Yaşar, 2007). Individuals who develop their writing skills can learn to control their thinking skills and make the learning process more effective and permanent (Raimes, 1983; Eryaman, 2008). Therefore, writing skills can be shown as one of the permanent learning factors.

The first years of elementary school is the period when writing is learned (Kodan, 2016). In this period, the shapes of letters are learned firstly. Then, the ways in which these shapes are produced (directions, writing style) are learned and the last stage of writing forms is started (Hamstra and Blöte, 1993; Akyol, 2011). In the continuation of educational life, writing skill continues as a process in which feelings and thoughts are conveyed to independence and continue to be developed.

The legibility, which is an important feature in the process of developing writing skills, is the letters that are determined correctly (Duran, 2011). The more accurate the writing of letters is taught, the greater the legibility. Also, many features such as the space between letters and words, the size of the letters, the alignment of the letters on the line affect legibility (Graham, Santoro, Berninger and Struck, 2006).

The fact that writing skills, which is a highly complex process, cannot be developed at an adequate level can cause various problems. Some of these problems are as follows (Akyol, 2000; Akyol, 2011):

- Letters cannot be written correctly,
- Writing difficulties can cause negative impact on children,
- Mixing small and large letters,
- Incomplete letters,
- Writing the written manuscript in different directions,
- Irregular letter shapes and sizes are just a few of these problems.

All these problems must be noticed by the individual or by the persons who can be the guides in the environment. Individuals who are inadequate about these and other problems like these can have academic and developmental problems by having difficulty in developing their writing skills (Rosenblum, Weiss and Parush, 2003).

Considering the four basic skills of language, it can be said that the most difficult learning skill is writing skills (Can and Altunbaş Yavuz, 2017). For this reason, we can say that the majority of individuals with learning disabilities experience problems in writing skills (Schumaker and Deshler, 2003). It is seen that the problem of writing problems about writing skills started from childhood (Bender, 2002). The problem of writing difficulties experienced in childhood causes individuals to start having problems with all their language skills.

This writing skill problem that can affect the whole life of individuals is called “writing difficulty ”or “ disgrafia,” (Marr and Cermak, 2001). Writing difficulties; it can be accepted as a retardation from a person's age, intelligence level and educational level. (İlker and Melekoğlu, 2017; Bedel, 2003). Without any reason, the ability of a person to lose his / her ability to write according to his / her peers affects all stages of development and prevents healthy communication. It is seen that

individuals who have problems in the transfer of knowledge experience difficulties in spelling (Bayraktar and Seçkin, 2012). In addition, letters, words, sentences and paragraphs are not written in accordance with the rule of aesthetically unpleasant images may occur as a result.

The problem of writing difficulties, which affect both academically and socially, needs to be eliminated. External intervention is almost imperative for individuals to have correct and healthy writing skills (Feder & Majnemer, 2003). Various studies are needed in order to eliminate the problem of writing difficulties. The first of these studies is diagnosis (Kuşdemir, Kurban and Bulut, 2018). Correct diagnosis of writing difficulties should be made as it will form the basis of the program to be implemented. There are some factors to be considered in order to make a correct diagnosis (Bayraktar and Seçkin, 2012). These factors;

- Ergonomic factors in writing; In order not to be the a problem of writing difficulties, it is the factor that includes the sitting style, paper-notebook position and pencil-holding positions of the students who can be considered as the preparation stage of writing skill.
- Readability; it is a factor that affects the condition of the slope and line, the shape and size of the letters, relative to each other.
- Spelling; it can be said as syllables in words are not complete, letter-syllable skipping or letter-syllable .
- Written expression; it involves spelling and punctuation rules and the type and content of the text. It is the last of the factors that have a positive and negative effect on writing skills.

It is an important step completing the diagnostic phase in a healthy way in order to eliminate the problem of writing difficulties. The second stage is the phase of improvement applications. The most important feature that should be considered during the implementation phase is that it should be taken into consideration that a consistent and long study will increase the efficiency in order to eliminate the problem (Graham and Harris, 2008). One point that should not be forgotten while conducting these studies is that reading and writing are interrelated and affect each other (Calp, 2013). For this reason, students' continuous reading and writing activities will be an important step to eliminate the problem (Can and Altunbaş Yavuz, 2017).

The cooperation between the teacher or the expert and the parents is very important in all these practices (Kuşdemir, Kurban & Bulut, 2018). During the application, the systematic work of teachers, parents and students strengthens the probability of success. After the studies, it is possible for the student who has difficulty to repeat at home and the support he receives from his parents can positively affect his determination to eliminate the problems experienced in both functional and affective characteristics. In addition, when the researches are examined, it is seen that the school success of the students who have close communication with their teachers has increased (White, 2013). Therefore, it is important for students to behave closely to students who have problems in this process.

Considering all these writing difficulties, first of all, the diagnosis of the students should be done carefully. After the appropriate diagnosis phase, the student should be encouraged to get rid of his prejudice against his writing skills and his work. It should be felt to the student that writing difficulty is not a disease but a difficulty. When motivation and interest skills are provided in writing, the implementation phase should be implemented in a planned and continuous manner. The individual differences between the students should not be forgotten and taken into consideration while making all this planning. The implementation of the plan designed for the student should be followed by the execution of the work in cooperation with the parent.



### **Purpose of the research**

The aim of this study is to develop applications for the elimination of writing difficulties of primary school second year students. For this purpose, the following questions will be answered:

1. What is the contribution of letter writing practices to the elimination of writing difficulties?
2. How does the practice of word writing contribute to the elimination of writing difficulties?
3. How does the practice of sentence writing contribute to the elimination of writing difficulties?
4. What is the contribution of text writing practices to the elimination of writing difficulties?
5. What is the persistence of the applications to eliminate writing difficulties?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Model**

In this research, qualitative model and action research design were used. action research consists of identifying the general problem, collecting data, making plans, evaluating and improving the implementation steps (Aksoy, 2003). This study is aimed at eliminating the writing difficulties of elementary school 2nd grade students and so it could be thought as action research.

### **Working group**

The participants of this research were consisted of 6 students who were found to have writing problems among the second grade students. The study group was determined by purposeful sampling selection technique.

The class size of the study group consists of 21 people. It can be said that students are socially and economically equivalent to each other. There are no students in the classroom who cannot read or write. The six students identified were at the same academic level as the whole class, except for writing skills.

### **Data Collection Process**

In the study, “Repeated Dictation and Motivation Practices” were used to eliminate the writing difficulties of the participants. “Repetitive Dictation” is a method used to eliminate the writing difficulties experienced by the participants in the letters, words, paragraphs and text titles of the participants. In this method, the researcher first explained the necessary studies to the participants on the board. Then he asked the participants to do the same practices in line with the explanations on the worksheets of the participants. Reinforcement studies were continued until the writing difficulties of the participants were solved.

Motivation enhancing studies were conducted by the researcher using interview method with each participant. In these interviews, it was aimed to change the negative attitudes developed by the participants about writing skills. The teacher often meets with parents of students in the classroom.

Parents do the necessary work on the social and academic development of the students. The parents' interviews and collaboration with the researcher helped to increase the motivation of the students.

“Multidimensional Legibility Scale” developed by Yıldız and Ateş (2010) was used for data collection tool before and after the applications.

**Table 1. Multidimensional Legibility Scale**

	Dimensions	Insufficient (1)	Intermediate (2)	Sufficient (3)
Before application	Slope			
	Space			
	Size			
	Shape			
	Line Tracking			
	Total			
	Dimensions	Insufficient(1)	Intermediate(2)	Sufficient(3)
After application	Slope			
	Space			
	Size			
	Shape			
	Line Tracking			
	Total			

With the multidimensional legibility scale, before and after application it can be done some determinations in “slope, space, size, shape, line tracking “ and “insufficient (1), intermediate (2) and sufficient (3)” levels in students’ writing.

In order to identify the problem of writing difficulties in the data collection process of the research, 6 texts written in poem type and previously encountered by the participants were determined. Among these texts, the text “Mouse“ is a song that the working environment enjoys to sing, and has been used to identify students who have written difficulties after obtaining expert approval.

After obtaining the necessary permissions, a detailed information meeting was held with the school administrators, class teachers and parents to ensure that the implementation process proceeded smoothly. The administrators, class teachers and parents of the relevant school received great interest in the research and provided all kinds of facilitation throughout the process.

In order to determine the permanence at the end of the process, the worksheet made at the first detection stage and the worksheet applied 21 days after the end of the application were scored by considering the MDLS

**Validity and Reliability**

In this study, in order to ensure validity and reliability, the worksheets included in the application were determined by the researchers and experts by reviewing their level of suitability. In addition, a validity and reliability-tested measurement tool was used to ensure validity and reliability. The scores of the students were determined with the co-decision of the researchers and the expert.

Researchers are capable of conducting this research. One of the researchers has done dozens of researches in the field of writing education and has 20 years of education, nine of which are primary school teachers. The other researcher is an experienced primary school teacher. He is the teacher of the working group.

## Data Analysis

The data obtained for the sub-problems of research 1-4. were analyzed by content analysis. The pre- and post-application writings of the students were compared by taking into consideration the dimensions in the MDLS. Scoring was not performed in these sub-problems. In each sub-problem, one of the articles of a randomly selected student before and after the application is given as an example.

In the analysis of the fifth sub-problem, descriptive and content analysis was used. The worksheets of the students were evaluated with MDLS; Before and after the application of the writings and their scores were compared. Taking into consideration that the lowest score to be obtained from the score is 5 and the highest score 15, the writings of the students whose total score is 5-8.3 are not legible, the writings of the students whose total score 8.4-11.7 are intermediate legible, the students whose total score is between 11.8 and 15 is made in the form of legible (Yıldız ve Ateş, 2010).

## RESULTS AND COMMENTS

### Findings and Comments on the First Sub-Problem

The first sub-problem of the research is “ What is the contribution of letter writing applications to the elimination of writing difficulties?” and the datas obtained from this are here.

#### Pre application



Figure 1. Pre-application worksheet example of letter writing.

#### Post application

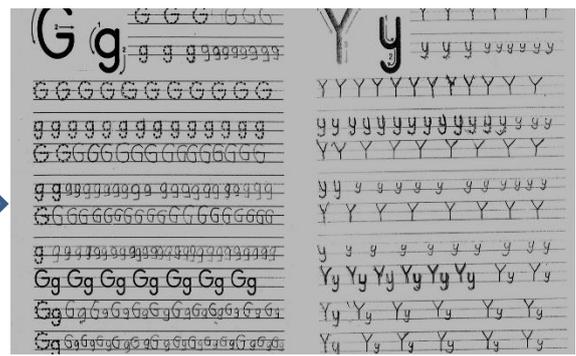


Figure 2. Post-application of worksheet for letter letter writing.

When examining Figure 1, it was seen that the participants could not perform the proper writing in size, shape and line tracking categories. When the letters “G-g” and “Y-y” were examined, it was observed that the participants wrote each letter sample differently. It was also observed that the letters were not written in the appropriate line spacing and did not continue on the line.

Figure 2 shows the post-application worksheet of the participant at the end of the ten-hour period. It was seen that the writing difficulties which were prominent in the pre-application studies of the participants were largely eliminated. Although the formal features were corrected only in the construction of the letter “G” it was found that it could not be made sufficiently in size. Except for the writing of this letter, there was a positive increase in other categories.

### Findings and Comments on the Second Sub-Problem

The second sub-problem of the research is” What is the contribution of the applications of word writing to the elimination of writing difficulties?” and the datas obtained from it are here.

**Pre application**

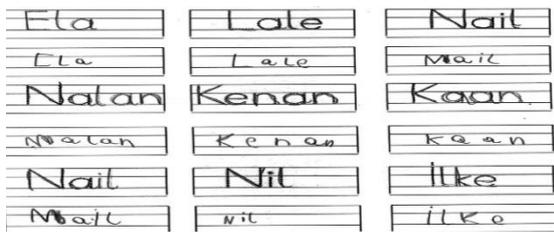


Figure 3. Pre-application example of the worksheet related to letter writing.

**Post application**



Figure 4. Post-application example of the worksheet related to letter writing.

When Figure 3 is examined, it is noteworthy that the participants made difficulties in size in the construction of upper and lower case letters. The participants made all the letters in an unreadable size. This writing difficulty directly affects the legibility.

When the application sheet which was done in post application in Figure 4 is examined, it is seen that upper and lower case separation can be done as it should be, and the words can be made in the appropriate dimensions in the line that should be written. No unreadable words were found in the studies. It can be said that there is a positive increase in word writing among participants.

**Findings and Comments on the Third Sub-Problem**

The third sub-problem of the research is “What is the contribution of the applications related to sentence writing to the elimination of writing difficulties?” and the datas obtained from it are here.

**Pre application**



Figure 5. Pre-application worksheet example of sentence writing.

**Post application**

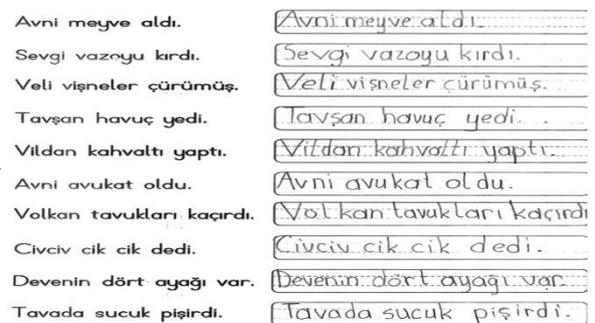


Figure 6. Post-application worksheet example of sentence writing.

As shown in Figure 5, no punctuation is used at the end of the sentence. The lack of punctuation can lead to confusion in the legality and comprehension process. In the worksheets before the application, it was determined that the participants had formal difficulty in making the letters “t, o, ö, z, k and y”. It was also noted that the participants made different sizes of letters in the word. It was seen that the words were not written in the line spacing that should be written and the line follow-up was not followed.

Figure 6 shows the worksheets made by the participants after the application. When this study was examined, the participants experienced significant improvements in their writing difficulties. The letters that could not be made before the application became formally appropriate after the application.

It was found that the problem of line tracking has disappeared. It was seen that the words in the sentence were greatly corrected in size.

### Findings and Comments on the Fourth Sub-Problem

The fourth sub-problem of the research “ How does writing applications contribute to the elimination of writing difficulties? ”Is presented in this section.

#### Pre application

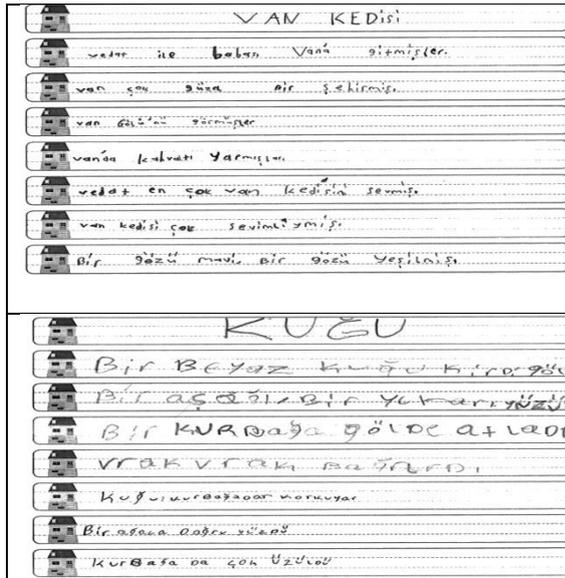


Figure 7. Pre-application worksheet example of sentence writing

#### Post application

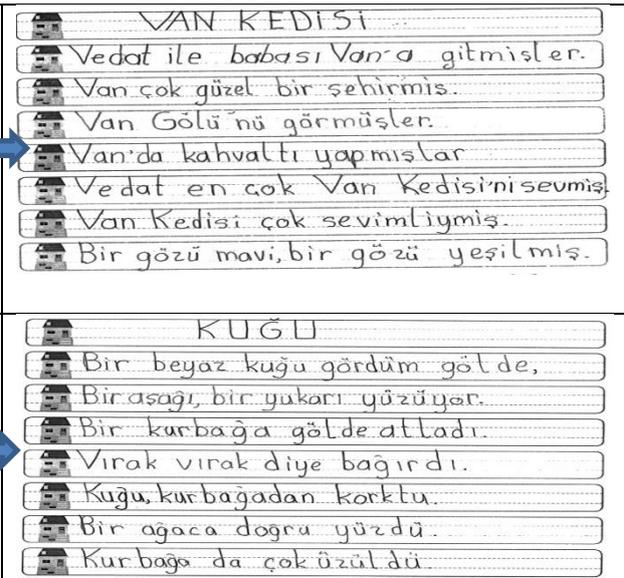


Figure 8. Post-application worksheet example of sentence writing

In Figure 7, when the sample of the worksheet made by the participants was examined, the size mismatch within the lower case letters was observed. In addition, the participant made upper and lower case sizes in the same way. It is not possible to select which of the letters in the text is uppercase and lowercase. The participants did not pay attention to the punctuation marks in the text. In addition, it was found that line tracking was not at the appropriate level.

When the figure 8 is examined, it is seen that the mismatch experienced by the participants regarding the size in the writing of the lower case letters has been eliminated. In addition, it has been found that the distinction of the sizes of upper and lower case letters can be made appropriately. The problem of the participant not using punctuation marks was eliminated and it was found that he used punctuation marks at appropriate places. When the worksheet done after the application was examined, it was seen that there were significant improvements in writing.

### Findings and Comments on the Fifth Sub-Problem

The fifth sub-problem of the research “ What is the persistence of the applications to eliminate writing difficulties? ”Is presented in this section.

	Participant 1		Participant 2		Participant 3		Participant 4		Participant 5		Participant 6	
	U.Ö.	U.S	U.Ö.	U.S	U.Ö.	U.S	U.Ö.	U.S	U.Ö.	U.S.	U.Ö.	U.S
Slope	2 p	3 p	2 p	3 p	2 p	3 p	2 p	3 p	2 p	3 p	1 p	3 p
Space	2 p	3 p	1 p	3 p	1 p	2 p	1 p	2 p	1 p	2 p	2 p	2 p
Size	1 p	3 p	1 p	2 p	1 p	3 p	1 p	2 p	1 p	2 p	1 p	2 p
Shape	1 p	3 p	1 p	2 p	1 p	2 p	1 p	2 p	1 p	2 p	2 p	2 p
Line Tracking	2 p	3 p	2 p	3 p	3 p	3 p	1 p	3 p	1 p	2 p	1 p	3 p
Total Point	8 p	15 p	7 p	13 p	8 p	13 p	6 p	12 p	6 p	11 p	7 p	12 p
Legibility Level of Writing	Nor Legible	Legible	Nor Legible	Intermediate Legible	Nor Legible	Legible						

Table 2. Evaluation of the participants' persistence studies according to the MDLS.

Participant 1 took 8 points from the article before the application; and 15 points from the printed letter to determine the permanence of the application. While the student's writing was "not legible" before the application; it increased to "legible level" after application. Participant 2 took 7 points from the article before the application; and 13 points from the printed letter to determine the permanence of the application. While the student's writing was "not legible" before the application; it increased to "legible level" after application. Participant 3 took 8 points from the article before the application; and 13 points from the printed letter to determine the permanence of the application. While the student's writing was "not legible" before the application; it increased to "legible level" after application. Participant 4 took 6 points from the article before the application; and 12 points from the printed letter to determine the permanence of the application. While the student's writing was "not legible" before the application; it increased to "legible level" after application. Participant 5 took 6 points from the article before the application; and 11 points from the printed letter to determine the permanence of the application. While the student's writing was "not legible" before the application; it increased to "intermediate legible level" after application. Participant 6 took 7 points from the article before the application; and 12 points from the printed letter to determine the permanence of the application. While the student's writing was "not legible" before the application; it increased to "legible level" after application.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

When the findings of the study are taken into consideration, there is a positive increase in the elimination of the writing difficulties of the participants. While 5 students in the study group could not write legible writing before the application; they were able to write legible writing in the permanence studies after the application. This is a noteworthy finding. Participant 5 was able to write at the intermediate level of legibility. It can be said that the Repeated Dictation and Motivation Practices applied in the study were successful. The practice of dictation which is used in practice is carried out repeatedly in terms of letters, words, sentences and text, and the contribution of the study group to the elimination of writing difficulties is significant.

According to Kodan (2016), the methods and techniques applied are an important factor for the elimination of writing difficulties. Methods and techniques should be appropriate to the study, and most importantly, these methods and techniques should be addressed to all participants. In a similar study, Calp (2013) emphasized that the methods and techniques to be applied should be specially

prepared for the participants. It enhances the possibility of successful results with the methods and techniques prepared individually for the participants.

Adaş and Bakir (2013) and Datchuk and Kubina (2012) emphasized that the use of contemporary approaches based on students in order to eliminate writing difficulties will increase the success. MacArthur (2000) argued that modern methods and techniques should be applied in relation to technology because it is the technological age of today. In addition, in most of the studies encountered in the literature, it has been suggested that the problem of writing stems from letter writing, which is the first stage of writing, and so this stage should be emphasized in order to eliminate writing difficulties (Kodan, 2016).

We can say that the motivation studies conducted during the research support the elimination of the writing difficulties of the students. One-to-one interviews with the students, motivating them continuously and receiving family support are also important factors for success.

Taşkaya and Yetkin (2015) emphasized the necessity of explaining why good writing is important in their study with classroom teachers. In another study on this problem, the positive effect of motivation on student achievement was explained and it was emphasized that students could overcome writing difficulties (Kaya, 2016; Westwood, 2008). In addition, it was emphasized that by providing family support for motivation, the students who have problems can continue their practice studies outside the school and thus be successful in solving the problem (Erdoğan, Gülay & Uzuner, 2017; Yıldız, 2013).

In order to eliminate writing difficulties, the teacher should have sufficient knowledge in the field and make the process fun. In the study, Graham (1997) emphasized that teacher's guiding role is an important factor for success in eliminating writing difficulties.

The action research model used in the research is in parallel with many studies. Kuşdemir, Kurban, and Bulut (2018) prove that they have achieved success using action research in their study with writing difficulties. In the same way, Yıldız (2013) states that the effective and correct implementation of action research in studies related to the elimination of writing difficulties will affect the success.

Writing is a skill that can affect a person's whole life. Therefore, all difficulties related to writing skills may affect other skill areas negatively. This problem, which affects the whole of human life, needs to be eliminated. In order to solve the problem of writing difficulties, it is necessary to deal with the individuals who have such problems individually and to implement an effective curriculum. Duration of the program, methods and techniques to be used, student motivation are important factors for success.

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