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The Continuity Between Pre-School Curriculum and First Grade Turkish Curriculum Based on Early Writing Skills

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Article Information	ABSTRACT
Received: 16.08.2020 *Accepted*: 08.06.2021 *Online First*: 13.12.2021 *Published*: 31.07.2022	This research aims to explore the continuity of the pre-school education program and the primary school Turkish literacy program in the context of early writing skills. These skills are identified within the scope of cognitive, socio-cultural, linguistic, and psycho-motor skills, and it is critical that there is a continuity of these education programs prepared for the children not to experience transition problems between the two educational settings and to ensure that they are complementary to each other. In this way, children will adapt to school more easily through developing their academic skills, and their learning skills will also be supported. In this study, the 2013 Preschool Education Program, which guides the early years education of 36-72-month-old children, and the 2019 Turkish Language Teaching Program were examined in terms of early writing skills. The document analysis method, which is a qualitative method, was used in the research, and the analyses were completed by using the NVivo12 program. The aims of the programs, necessary qualifications, activities, achievements, materials, types of writing, learning-teaching approach, assessment and evaluation approach, classroom organization, genre, and writing skills were examined in the extent of the study. As of the results, similar and different characteristics while supporting writing skills were found, and the aspects in which they support each other, and differences were determined. Findings showed that children's development in both settings was approached as a whole, and it was aimed to transform the writing awareness developed in the pre-school period into the writing habit in the primary school program. It has been also revealed that both programs complement each other and support the transformation of writing skills into a behavioral system; in these programs, a student-centered and process-oriented approach, and multi-dimensional assessment tools for writing were emphasized. Therefore, integrity in terms of socio-cultural, cognitive, psychomotor, and linguistics skills was ensured. The main differences can be summarised as having a play-based approach in the preschool program and a learning-oriented approach in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum, different types of activities, preschool program being more comprehensive and richer in terms of suggested resources, the diversity of classroom arrangements, and the lack of themes in the preschool program with regards to early writing skills. **Keywords:** Early writing development, continuity, pre-school education, first-year primary education

1. INTRODUCTION

The development of academic skills in early childhood is one of the main goals of education in this period. Children's writing and reading skills are used for the evaluation of knowledge throughout their academic life. Before formal education, many children learn foundational skills such as phonological skills, print awareness, writing awareness, and oral language skills necessary for writing and reading development (Puranik & Lonigan, 2014). With the development of these foundational skills, which are supported through and accelerate with the activities carried out in pre-school education, children can more easily learn how to read and write in primary school.

Studies related to writing skills in early childhood are necessarily linked to reading skills, and developing reading skills is considered an important process for evaluating writing skills (Sulzby, 1992). Young children's early reading behaviors are closely related to storybooks, and children show skills ranging from pointing and describing pictures to creating stories in the form of dialogue or monologue (Boardman, 2020). These reading attempts of children support the development of early writing skills such as recognizing the language and sounds phonologically, understanding the relationship between sounds, understanding that each shape/letter characterizes a sound, and oral language development (Saracho, 2017). Several studies argued that children's attempts to write begin with scribbling (Frank, 2009). Based on Tolchinsky's (2003) differentiation

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hypothesis, these scribbles contain universal features consisting of linearity (writing units, markings on straight lines), discreteness (segmentation, units separated by spaces), and iconicity (abstractness of writing units). These features show that children's drawing and writing skills are different, and children even at a young age can comprehend that writing can have different meanings than direct expression in pictures (DeFauw, 2016). Learning to write, in these regards, requires learning that it has different and special implementations both for symbolic representation and for each language (Puranik & Lonigan, 2011). Thus, these features can be seen in the writing outcomes as children's writing knowledge develops.

In the preschool setting, children begin to discover some characteristics of writing such as language-specific writing direction (from left to right) and symbolic shapes (letters) (Harmey & Rodgers, 2017). When they transit to primary school, they develop the necessary skills to create meaningful texts such as the use of letters, words, sentences, capitalization, and punctuation marks with formal writing instruction (Güneş, Uysal, & Taç, 2016). A smooth transition for children to formal school, where there is a more formal education process than a play-based one, will prevent possible interruption and continuity problems between these two educational steps. Fisher (2010), in his study with pre-school and primary school first-graders, found that 5-6-year-old children are surrounded with activities both indoor and outdoor in a play-based environment in pre-school, while first-grade children passively sit on the carpets and listen to the teacher; and therefore argued that this creates a discontinuity between the two settings. In this paper, the continuity between preschool and first-grade Turkish teaching programs is examined by exploring whether it is compatible with the developmental skills of children.

Research carried out in different theoretical frameworks include the writing processes of children (Hayes & Flower, 1980; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Berninger & Swanson, 1994; Hayes, 1996; Kellogg, 1996; Baddeley, 2003), the development of writing styles in the early years (Mackie et al ., 2013; Myhill & Jones, 2009; Christianakis, 2011; Graham & Harris, 2009) and socio-cultural contexts that support writing skills (Goodman & Goodman, 1979; Galbraith & Rijlaarsdam, 1999; Dyson, 2002; Prior, 2006). Indeed, many studies have classified writing instruction into two main categories: traditional instruction and process-based instruction (Cutler & Graham, 2008). Traditional teaching is based on textbooks and exercise books, and the implementation of methods determined by the teacher (McCarthey & Ro, 2011). Process-based teaching, on the other hand, begins with a short lecture by the teacher and the teacher plans the lesson depending on the needs of the students (McCarther & Ro, 2011). Students are free to choose the topic they want to work on and participate in different activities (Kellogg, 2008). In addition to these approaches, Ivanic (2004) also helped to establish an explanatory model for writing instruction where she discusses six different types of discourses as skill-based, creativity-based, process-based, genre-based, social practice-based, and socio-political-based discourse.

In the Turkish preschool program, it can be seen that teachers support children with readiness activities for learning literacy. The activities carried out in these classes are based on the development of emerging writing skills (Yangın, 2007). The preschool program is a child-centered and developmentally integrated program with a spiral structure at its core (MEB, 2013). In this program, children's emerging writing skills are supported by play-based activities. According to Kandır and Yazıcı (2016), although sufficient importance was given to language development in this program, teachers were not given adequate guidance on how to support children's writing skills; especially, explanations on how to develop children's communication skills with peers and adults, which are also important for the socio-cultural development of children, are insufficient. Activities in the program related to writing skills during this period were directly associated with children's fine motor skills (Alisinanoğlu & Şimşek, 2012). This understanding leads preschool teachers to be limited in their activities in the classroom and to put the skills that provide the foundation for writing skills such as phonological awareness, visual perception, vocabulary development, listening, and speaking skills to the background (Erdoğan, Altınkaynak, & Erdoğan, 2013).

Considering the primary school, it can be seen that this period is a continuation of pre-school (MEB, 2019). At this educational level, teachers are expected to have taught their students to write until the end of the first grade (MEB, 2019). Unlike pre-school education, the primary school curriculum represents a formal education system, and therefore, a more formal point of view appears especially in writing teaching (Skouteris, Watson, & Lum, 2012). In the study of Erden and Altun (2014), it was stated that the encountering of this formal system when young children transit to primary school causes adaptation problems. Writing activities in this period also focused on lower-level skills such as pen-holding skills, legibility of writing (beautiful writing), spacing between words, use of upper and lower case letters, and punctuation (Güneş, Uysal, & Taç, 2016). It can thus be suggested that the sharp transition from a play-based education program (Dereobalı, 2016) to more formal education can create a continuity problem between these two education periods.

The transition period from one educational level to another is accepted as an important indicator that affects children's learning skills and later academic success. According to Bransford et al. (1999), the learning status of children in an educational period allows the prediction of their learning status in future academic periods. In this context, academic skills developed at the beginning of the primary school period can be discussed as affecting the success of children in their further education (Brinkman, et al., 2013). In another major study in Icelandic schools, Einarsdottir (2006) reported that the pre-school education program emphasizes play, while the teaching in the primary school programs is shaped within the framework of a more formal system. Although there seems to be a trend here to draw a clear framework for pre-school education, it can be understood that the play-based education highlighted in preschool is not perceived as teaching where teaching and learning should be more formal. In order for the transition process between these two different education periods to be evaluated successfully, first of all, the education programs should complement each other and have a spiral structure (Dinç, 2013).

This successful transition period is needed so that children can successfully enter primary school and meet the changing expectations of school and culture such as a new environment, teachers, peer group, and routines (O'Farrelly & Hennessy, 2013). Foundational writing skills developed in the pre-school period are designed to develop children's literacy competencies and to prepare them for primary school education. In order to ensure continuity in the transition from one educational level to the next, it is expected that children's fine motor skills, pencil holding skills, phonological awareness, and self-expression skills are developed in the preschool period (Suggate, Pufke, & Stoeger, 2016). It is also seen that teachers in pre-school undertake many tasks such as supporting children when they need them, providing children with various resources, and encouraging family-school cooperation (Applebee & Langer, 2009). The differentiation of this play-based and supportive approach in primary school and its transformation into a more formal system creates various difficulties for both children and teachers. To illustrate, the development of children may be interrupted due to the formal arrangement of the classroom environment in the primary school, the majority of the activities performed on the desk, the existence of over-crowded classroom environments, the expectation of students to learn many different academic subjects at the same time, long hours and insufficient stimuli (Öztürk, 2011).

Much of the current literature in Turkey deals with the preparation activities for literacy in the pre-school period (Tukir Özçelik, 2018; Yılmaz Bolat & Dal, 2017; Yılmaz Bolat, 2019; Dönmezler, 2016), on the development of writing in the primary school period. (Höbek & Taşkaya, 2018; Özkaya & Ataş, 2015; Fırat, Balcı & Kök, 2019), and the program books of these two periods (Altun & Güler, 2020; Kalaycı & Yıldırım, 2020; Kartal & Güner, 2017); however, there is no study examining the continuity of the early writing skills in the Preschool Education Program and the writing skills in the Turkish lesson curriculum. Furthermore, it was determined that the spirality of the preschool education program and the primary school Life Sciences curriculum was examined by Flight-Güldalı and Demirbaş (2017), and the spirality of the mathematics achievements of the same programs was examined by Çalışkan-Dedeoğlu and Alat (2012). With this study, it is thought that an important step will be taken to fill this gap in the literature in the Turkish Education System.

1.1. Research aims

In this study, the 2013 Pre-School Curriculum and the 2019 Turkish Literacy Curriculum are examined regarding the continuity of writing skills.

1.1.1. Sub-problems of the research

1. What are the similarities and differences between the Pre-School Education Program and the Turkish Language Curriculum in terms of aims, key features, and suggested activities?
2. What are the similarities and differences between the materials, classroom organizations, and themes suggested in the Preschool Education Program and the Turkish Language Curriculum?
3. Is there a continuity between early writing skills in Preschool Education Program and writing skills in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum based on learning-teaching approaches, and assessment and evaluation approaches?
4. Is there a continuity between the underlined early writing skills in the Preschool Education Program and the writing skills in the Turkish Curriculum?

2. METHODOLOGY

In this research, the data were analyzed by document analysis method since it was aimed to examine the similarities and differences in the programs that guide teachers in order to support the writing skills of children in the preschool and first grade period in Turkey through investigating the continuity (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis is a qualitative research method in which written documents are analyzed in detail and systematically, in which existing data are examined and interpreted to develop information about the relevant subject (Kıral, 2020). In this study, the continuity between emerging literacy activities in the preschool education program and the writing skills part of the 1st-grade Turkish lesson curriculum was examined comparatively, and the document analysis method was used as the writing objectives, achievements, and skills of these two programs. Although these programs cover the whole academic year in September-June, the learning-teaching approaches in the programs, the aims of the programs, the assessment and evaluation methods, and the suggestions made to the teachers for classroom practice are also discussed within the scope of the study. Thus, the data used in this research were systematically analyzed and interpreted.

2.1. Participants

The programs examined in this study consist of the Pre-School Education Program (2013) prepared by the General Directorate of Basic Education of the Ministry of National Education and the 1st-grade achievements of the Turkish Lesson Curriculum prepared by the Ministry of National Education (2019) and the implementation of the Turkish Lesson Curriculum.

2.2. Analysis of Data

In this study, thematic analysis, which is one of the content analysis methods, was used. This method is one of the qualitative analysis methods used to examine the documents in detail in terms of descriptive and content (Çalık & Sözbilir, 2014). In this manner, first of all, the documents were read in detail several times in order for the researcher to get familiar with these programs. Then, the first codes were created to examine how early writing skills were approached in these programs. In the next step, a deeper analysis of the codes, together with different codes, identified common patterns to create possible themes. After the detailed analysis of all the codes was completed, the information supported by each theme was examined and a more accurate content arrangement was organized.

The data set consists of a total of 180 pages of documents, 114 pages in pre-school and 66 pages in primary school. In this research, NVivo12, a qualitative analysis program, was utilized. In the first step, codes were created to understand the activities expected to be done by the students in the early childhood period and the skills required to be developed, the aims of these two education stages, the key features of the programs, the learning outcomes, the use of in-class and out-of-class learning areas, the materials that should be present in the classroom to support the writing skills of the children, the teaching-learning approaches and the students' skills. These codes were created to understand how teachers and the program were evaluated. Then, they were gathered together and themes emerged. In the second step, it was examined whether there was a continuity in these two different educational settings based on the programs within the scope of early writing skills.

2.3. Validity and Reliability of the Research

As stated by Topu et al. (2013, p. 117), among the validity measures used in qualitative studies, the following methods were used: Explaining the reason for choosing the method used, associating the method used with the literature, explaining the sample characteristics, specifying the sampling method, explaining the data collection tool and process, and describing the implementation process of the study. The validity of the study was tried to be increased by explaining the data analysis process, describing the assumptions and limitations, describing the role of the researcher, and defining the nature. In this context, the codes associated with the literature were used in the analysis of the data, and the findings were presented in tables without adding any comments, and these findings were explained with examples representing the codes. In addition to the research process, there are codings ready to access the data set and examination by other researchers. Reliability was also tried to be ensured by taking expert opinion, diversification, and language control by experts.

3. FINDINGS

Within the scope of this research, the curriculum documents that allow teachers to plan their teaching on a daily, monthly and annual basis and guide how to support students' skills were compared. In this context; a total of 11 themes were determined, including purpose, key features of the programs, activities, achievements, materials used, types of writing, learning-teaching approach, assessment and evaluation approach, classroom organization, themes, and writing skills. First, the codes designed for each of the determined themes were brought together and tables were created. The purpose of these tables is to compare the curriculum documents prepared by the Ministry of National Education for each education setting; to investigate their similarities and differences and to look at the continuity between them. For this aim, the tables are interpreted and the findings are presented in this section.

The first sub-problem of the research is: "What are the similarities and differences of the Pre-School Curriculum and the Turkish Language Curriculum in terms of purpose, key features, and suggested activities?". Findings related to this problem are presented in Table 1, Table 2, and Table 3.

Table 1.
Aims of Preschool Education Program and Turkish Lesson Curriculum

Preschool Program	Turkish Lesson Curriculum
Ensuring children's physical, cognitive and emotional development and developing good habits	To help children reach language pleasure and consciousness by enriching their vocabulary based on what they read, listen to/watch; to enable them to develop their feelings, thoughts, and imaginations
Preparing them for primary school	To enable children to express their feelings and thoughts and their views or arguments on a subject effectively and understandably, verbally and in writing.
To create a common upbringing environment for children from disadvantaged environments and families.	To enable children to put emphasis on national, spiritual, moral, historical, cultural, and social values, to strengthen their national feelings and thoughts.
To ensure that children speak Turkish correctly and clearly.	To ensure that children use Turkish consciously, correctly, and carefully in accordance with the rules of speaking and writing.
It is certainly not intended to teach reading or writing. There is no reading and writing instruction in the program. There is no displaying	To develop listening/watching, speaking, reading, and writing skills

and teaching how to print letters.

Raising awareness for literacy	To develop the skills of researching, discovering, interpreting, and cognitively structuring information.
Primarily, to make children understand the necessity of literacy and its relation with real life.	To develop the skills of accessing, organizing, questioning, using, and producing information from printed materials and multimedia sources.
Supporting children to develop a positive perception towards literacy and school	To help them gain the love and habit of reading and writing.
	To enable them to understand and critically evaluate and question what they read.
	To enable them to realize and adopt aesthetic and artistic values through works of Turkish and world culture and art.

Based on Table 1 (above), it is apparent that the developmental processes of children in the pre-school period are acknowledged as an integrated process, and this approach lasts in the first grade of primary school when pre-school and Turkish lesson programs are compared. Rankin (1985, p. 51) suggested that for learning to be effective, the process must be situational, integrative, and holistic and that the activities done in the classroom should be supported not only by the act of writing itself but also by learning activities that define writing as a total behavior system. In this regard, it is aimed to provide equal opportunities for children in the pre-school period and to increase their readiness for primary school, along with socio-cultural purposes such as emphasizing the native language, developing a positive attitude towards writing skills, and using writing in real life. While the Turkish lesson curriculum recognizes these aims, it intended to shift the awareness of writing developed into writing habits by supporting students' social, emotional, and cognitive skills, also supporting them to become questioning, criticizing, and researching individuals. Children's foundational skills were supported in both periods, and their writing skills were transformed into a behavior system, thus ensuring continuity between the programs.

Table 2.
Key Features of Pre-School Curriculum and First Grade Turkish Lesson Curriculum

Pre-school education program	Turkish lesson curriculum
Play-based	Aimed at developing value and skills
Child-centered	Holistic
Developmental	Meaningful and permanent learning
Spiral	Spiral
Eclectic	Integrated with other disciplines and daily life around values, skills, and competencies
Exploration	Digital competence
Creativity	Stability
Learning centers	Know-how/learning to learn
Family-school cooperation/ Family participation	Active participation learning
Individual differences and needs are at the forefront	Interpersonal and individual differences and needs are at the forefront
Democratic education	Entrepreneurship
Environment	The social environment is at the forefront
Learning by doing	Competent, current, valid, and capable of establishing relations with life in the teaching and learning process
Native language	Communication in native/foreign languages
Supportive of independence	Problem-solving skills
Imagination	Theory-practice integrity
Critical thinking skills	Critical thinking skills
Guidance services	Robust and associated with prior learning
Developmental assessment	Understanding of maximum diversity and flexibility in the measurement and evaluation process/ Multi-focused assessment and evaluation
Individualized Education Programs for children with special needs	Individualized Education Programs for children with special needs

In the preschool education program, a play-based and child-centered approach is emphasized, family involvement is underlined, the child's relationship with the environment is given importance in educational planning, and many skills such as imagination, creativity, and critical thinking are stressed. Moreover, the development of children is followed and evaluated instead of their success, thus, an integrated program guiding children and families was established (Table 2). With the Turkish lesson curriculum, it is aimed that when children transit to the first grade, they get education within the framework of a program that supports the skills and learning they developed in the pre-school period, as well as supporting digital competencies, raising entrepreneurial and determined individuals, and providing meaningful and permanent learning. The most important difference between these two programs, which complement each other in many issues, is that one is play-based and the other is learning-

oriented. The reflection of this difference within the scope of early writing skills is that the process-based skills developed and supported in pre-school are organized through an outcome-based approach when transitioning to primary school, and it leads to a disconnection between these two educational levels, mostly taking into account accuracy of writing (Deane, et al., 2008). However, much of the criticism that this approach has attracted relates to that when evaluated socio-culturally and cognitively, development should be accepted not only as a product but also as a process, and in the literature that writing skills will not develop simultaneously for every child in the same order (Galbraith & Rijlaarsdam, 1999).

Table 3.
Comparison of Suggested Activities in Preschool and First Grade Turkish Lessons

Pre-school education program	Turkish lesson curriculum
Individual activities	Individual activities
Small group activities	Group activities
Large group activities	
Integrated activities	Extracurricular activities
On-desk activities	On-desk activities
Turkish language activities	Language activities
Interactive book reading exercises	Use of digital resources

The activities suggested within the scope of the preschool education program and first-grade Turkish lesson teaching are compared in Table 3. The individual activities, on-desk activities, and language activities emphasized in the preschool program are similar to the Turkish lesson curriculum; small-large group activities are only included as group activities in the Turkish curriculum, and integrated activities and interactive book reading activities are replaced by extracurricular activities and digital resources. With these different types of activities, children are able to develop their self-confidence, acquire receptive and expressive language skills, and prepare for primary school by participating in different group activities in the preschool period. With the different activities added in primary school, the continuity of children's development can be ensured. As Ivanic (2004, p. 235) argues, "it involves not only learning the composition and structure of the linguistic text but also learning who wrote it, how, when, at what speed, under what conditions, with what media and for what purpose". The existence of pedagogy is important for children to develop their writing skills in the early period.

The second sub-problem of the research is: "What are the similarities and differences between the materials, classroom organizations, and themes suggested in the Pre-School Education Program and the Turkish Language Curriculum?". Findings related to this problem are presented in Table 4, Table 5, and Table 6.

Table 4.
Comparison of Suggested Materials in Preschool and First Grade Turkish Lesson Curriculum

Materials	Pre-school education program	Turkish lesson curriculum
Written materials	Different colors of cards, newspapers, magazines with the names and symbols of the centers in the classroom	Short texts, poem, tables, graphics
Printed materials	Picture books, brochures, encyclopedias, atlases, catalogs, picture cards in different sizes, written materials, posters prepared under different themes, ABC books, fabric books, books prepared by children, restaurant menus, telephone directory, models of story, and fairy tale heroes, three-dimensional picture books, puzzle books or cards, coloring books, nursery rhymes, poetry books, biographies and concept books, memory cards, concept toys	Maps, advertisements, posters, product labels, leaflets, instructions
Writing materials	Crayon, dry paint, gas pen, watercolor, acrylic paint, glue paint, white paper, colored background cardboard, roll kraft paper, nylon bags, foam (styrofoam) boards, fabric, glass, metal surfaces, flat stones, bottle jars and various sized cardboard boxes, paper cups, patterned wallpapers, container papers, newspaper magazines, wood coloring materials, all kinds of collage (cut and paste) materials, papers of different colors and patterns, aluminum foil, play dough as kneading material, clay, glue as white (plastic) glue, scissors, paper napkins and rolls, straws, toothpicks, pieces of fabric, colored cotton, shampoo bottles, threads, buttons, plaster molds, masks, pasta, beads, painters' paintings and reproductions, postcards, posters, travel photos, museum brochures, stickers, picture calendars, pictures made by children, exhibition board, newspapers and magazines with art news, photos taken by children, p for project works, collections, pictures promoting countries, aprons or old t-shirts for children, palette, canvas, print works; potato sheets, sheets, sponge molds, brushes, easels, number cards, (cardboard, cardboard, wooden numbers), matching cards, colored paper, materials of various lengths (pens, straws, paints), blackboard, notebooks, self-adhesive notepads, old typewriter, keyboard	Standard writing pad or lined notebook, pens, crayons

			Computer, tablet, slides, television, interactive board, internet, EBA contents
Digital materials	CDs where stories are told, computer, projector		Computer, tablet, slides, television, interactive board, internet, EBA contents
Visual materials	Photographs, pictures, posters		Cartoons, photographs, pictures
Graphic organizers	Maps		Concept maps, mind maps
Auditory materials	Instruments: Percussion instruments (Orff instruments), glockenspiel, metallophone, xylophone, rhythm (weighing) stick, castanet, maracas, agogo, steel triangle, cymbals, drum, tambourine from percussion instruments. For teachers: piano, organ, guitar, violin, block flute, melodica, etc. CD player, classical music CDs, children's songs CDs and music books for children		

In Table 4, the materials recommended supporting children's skills in the preschool education program and the Turkish language curriculum are illustrated. These materials are grouped under seven headings: written, printed, writing, digital, visual, audio materials, and graphic organizers. It is clear from the table that the preschool education program includes these resources in a much more comprehensive and detailed manner. The possible reason for the difference between these two education programs is that the preschool program covers the entire pre-school period and the Turkish lesson program is designed only for mother-tongue proficiency and development. However, closer inspection of findings indicates that children are surrounded by a wide variety of educational materials in the pre-school period, their skills are supported in many ways and some materials appeal to different sensory experiences. On the other hand, according to Kırmızı and Kasap (2013), the accuracy of the text is considered the first step in creating an effective text. Therefore, it is possible to aim to develop children's accurate writing skills by supporting their writing skills in the first grade of primary school with more traditional methods such as the use of pen and paper. In this setting, children take their first steps to learn how to write but the environment is primarily equipped with written materials rather than audio-visual materials in order for children to be ready for writing. Also, materials refer to an approach for children's transition to the independent writing period. Thus, it is thought that in environments rich in written materials, children develop the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that are the basis of reading and writing (Saracho, 2017). At this point, there is a sharp discontinuity between the pre-school education program and the Turkish lesson curriculum.

Table 5.
Comparison of Classroom Organizations Emphasized in Preschool and First Grade Turkish Language Curriculum

Pre-school education program	Turkish lesson curriculum
Corners based on interest	
Learning centers	
Indoors-outdoors activities	Indoor activities
Field trips	

Table 5 compares the classroom arrangements emphasized in the pre-school and Turkish language curriculum and it can be stated that the preschool program includes corners based on interests, learning centers, indoor activities, and field trips, which are not expressed for first-graders. The difference between these programs may result in the intensification of classroom activities in primary school, and children generally sitting on the desk for long hours when they transit to this educational level. Thus, visual problems may occur when children are too close to the desk while reading or writing (Bakır, et al., 2014) and students may experience in classroom environments other problems related to physical development, learning efficiency, and discomfort (İsmailoğlu & Zorlu, 2018). While such problems affect overall development, they can create negative experiences in terms of developing writing skills during children's transition from pre-school to primary school.

Table 6.
Comparison of Themes in Preschool and First Grade Turkish Lesson Curriculum

Pre-school education program	Turkish lesson curriculum
In pre-school education, there is no subject or theme-centered education in developing skills, but various subjects can be used while planning the education process. The main purpose here is not to teach the subject, but to raise awareness and practice the with the help of that subject.	Virtues Our National Culture War of Independence and Atatürk Individual and Society Reading Culture Communication Rights and Freedom Self-improvement Science and technology Health and Sports Time and Space

evaluation; in the Turkish lesson program, it is the active participation of the students in the evaluation. The development process followed in pre-school is compiled with portfolios and helps primary school teachers to evaluate the development when children transit to primary school. It is recommended to use multidimensional assessment tools in both periods. Thus, the continuity of the programs in terms of assessment and evaluation was ensured.

The fourth sub-problem of the research is: "How is the continuity relationship between early writing skills in Preschool Education Program and writing skills in Turkish Curriculum?". Findings related to this problem are presented in Table 9, Table 10, Table 11, and Table 12.

Table 9.
Early Writing Outcomes in Pre-school Program

Pre-school education program		
Socio-cultural development areas	Communication	Using language for communication
	Self-expression	Expressing what they listen/watch in various ways
	Meaning-making	Reading visual materials
	Meaning-making	Recognizing symbols used in daily life
Linguistic development areas	Sentence construction	Making sentences according to syntax rules
	Vocabulary	Vocabulary development
	Reading awareness	Demonstrate reading awareness
	Writing awareness	Demonstrate writing awareness
	Grammar	Using grammatical structures while speaking
Cognitive development areas	Phonological awareness	Distinguishing sounds
	Phonological awareness	Demonstrate phonological awareness
	Comprehension	Understanding the meaning of what they listen/watch
	The use of voice	Using the voice appropriately
Physico-motor development areas	Fine-motor skills	Performing movements that require fine-motor skills

Table 10.
Writing Outcomes of the First Grade Turkish Course Curriculum

Turkish Lesson Curriculum			
Watching/ Listening	**Cognitive development areas**	*Phonological awareness*	Distinguishing between natural and artificial sounds.
		Phonological awareness	Imitating the sound he/she hears.
		Recognizing letter-sound relationship	Distinguishing letters corresponding to sounds.
	Socio-cultural development areas	*Communication*	Following verbal instructions.
		Communication	Implementing listening strategies.
		Communication	Comprehending the speaker's non-verbal messages.
		Meaning-making	Making predictions about the text to listen/watch based on the image(s).
		Meaning-making	Making predictions about the development of events when he/she listens/watches.
		Self-expression	Talking about the text listened/watched.
	Cognitive development areas	*Comprehension*	Determining the subject of what he/she listens to/watches.
		Comprehension	Answering questions about what he/she has listened/watched.
Speaking	**Socio-cultural development areas**	*Vocabulary*	Using words based on their meanings.
		Self-expression	Making impromptu speeches.
		Self-expression	Talking about a specific topic.
		Communication	Implementing speaking strategies.
Reading	**Cognitive development areas**	*Recognizing sound-letter relationship*	Recognizing and vocalizing the letter.
		Comprehension	Answering questions about images.
		Comprehension	Answering questions about the text.
		Comprehension	Determining the subject of the text.

		Comprehension	Determining the appropriate title/headings for the content of the text.
	Linguistic development areas	Reading awareness	Recognizing the main parts of the reading material.
		Reading	Reading syllables and words.
		Reading	Reading simple and short sentences.
		Reading	Reading short texts.
		Punctuation marks	Reading regarding the punctuation marks.
		Intonation	Reading with attention to stress, intonation, and pronunciation.
		Reading	Reading poems.
		Reading	Reading texts written in different fonts.
		Vocabulary	Guessing the antonyms of words.
		Reading	Implementing reading strategies.
		Writing awareness	Understanding the meanings of shapes, symbols, and signs.
	Socio-cultural development areas	Meaning-making	Guessing words and their meanings based on images.
		Meaning-making	Predicting the content of the text to be read based on the images.
		Self-expression	Telling the main lines of what he has read.
Writing	**Physico-motor development areas**	Fine-motor skills	Painting and drawing.
		Technical skills	Writing letters with attention to the technique.
		Technical skills	Writing numbers with attention to the technique
		Technical skills	Using appropriate spacing between letters, words, and sentences.
		Word construction	Writing syllables and words.
		Sentence construction	Writing meaningful and grammatically correct sentences.
		Punctuation marks	Using capital letters and punctuation appropriately.
		Writing	Doing writing exercises.
		Writing	Implementing writing techniques.
	Socio-cultural development areas	Meaning-making	Writing words and sentences about images.
		Meaning-making	Supporting writings with visual elements.
		Communication	Sharing what is written.
	Cognitive development areas	Reviewing	Reviewing what is written.

In Tables 9 and 10, the targeted achievements related to early writing skills in the pre-school program and writing skills in the first-grade Turkish lesson program of primary school are revealed. These achievements were examined in terms of socio-cultural, cognitive, psychomotor, and linguistic writing development at both educational levels. In the pre-school education program, socio-cultural development was supported in the context of early writing skills, and it is aimed for children to realize that the purpose of using language is communication, to express themselves clearly, and to learn that different visual resources such as writing, picture, drawing, and photographs have different meanings for communication. Within the scope of linguistic development, it is aimed that children learn syntax rules, improve their vocabulary, gain awareness of reading and writing, and develop grammar. Discussing the differences between oral and writing development, Myhill and Jones (2009) stated that the syntax rules used while writing is lexically dense because they contain various vocabulary and passive sentence structures more frequently. However, oral skills developed in the early years improve children's ability to understand and write the text in the future (Latham, 2002). In addition to these skills, the preschool education program underlined the development of cognitive skills such as phonological awareness, comprehension, use of sound, and psycho-motor skills such as fine motor skills.

In the Turkish lesson program, four basic groups were organized as listening/watching, speaking, reading, and writing as following the skills in pre-school. In the analysis of the data, each group was associated with cognitive, sociocultural, linguistic, and psychomotor development. In this period, it is aimed that children enhance writing skills. Based on this program, at the end of the first grade of primary school, children should develop phonological awareness, realize letter-sound relationship, express themselves verbally and in writing, enrich their vocabulary, and use linguistics such as punctuation marks in the texts they write by improving their reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. In this regard, there is a continuity relationship between the preschool education program and the Turkish lesson program.

Table 11.
Comparison of Preschool Writing Preparation Skills and Genre Supported in First Grade Turkish Curriculum

Pre-school education program	Turkish lesson curriculum
Primary school preparatory studies are the whole of the studies in which children are equally supported in all areas such as social and emotional, motor, cognitive, language, and self-care skills during the time they attend pre-school education institutions.	Informative texts (Quotes (proverb, idiom, graffiti, currency, etc.)
	Narrative texts (comic book, fable, story, cartoon, fairy tale, legend, epic, humorous anecdote, theater)
	Poetry (Mania, lullaby, song, folk song, poem, rhyme, counting, riddle)

In Table 11, the genres of writing emphasized in the preschool program and the Turkish lesson program is compared. What stands out in the table is that preschool children's early skills are supported and children are not introduced to any specific genre. When they begin the first grade, children encounter different genres of writing such as informative and narrative texts and poetry, and thus they are expected to learn to write with a holistic approach. Especially in the early years, it is of great importance for children to encounter different genres of writing and texts for their writing development (Juzwik, et al., 2006). Understanding the types, meanings, purposes, and functions of writing is an important step in learning to communicate in different types (Zecker, 1999). In this context, it is seen in the program books that the literacy preparation skills of children are supported at an advanced level in primary school.

Table 12.
Comparison of Writing Skills in Preschool and First Grade Turkish Curriculum

Pre-school education program	Turkish lesson curriculum
Visual perception studies (eye-hand coordination, figure-ground discrimination, shape constancy, location in space, spatial relations, speed, etc.)	First reading and writing preparation
Auditory perception/phonological awareness studies (listening, speaking, sensing, distinguishing sounds, producing words that start and end with the same sound, etc.)	Listening training exercises (recognizing, distinguishing, and imitating sounds that correspond to natural and artificial sound sources)
Attention and memory studies (finding similarities and differences, keeping in mind, remembering, etc.)	Exercises to strengthen finger, hand, and arm muscles (works to support the student before painting and drawing)
Basic concept studies (various studies on other concepts found in the concept list in the program book and deemed necessary)	Painting and line studies (Line studies which will provide students with hand flexibility by considering the writing directions of the letters, main characters, and writing aesthetics in accordance with the structural characteristics of the letter to be written)
Problem-solving and estimation studies	Beginning initial reading and writing, and progression
Using pencil and dexterity exercises (holding the pencil correctly, controlling and using the pencil properly, drawing, painting, cutting, folding, kneading, sticking, etc.)	Feeling, recognizing, and distinguishing the sound (showing the letter corresponding to the sound and the sound-letter relationship comprehension activities)
Literacy awareness and motivation development studies	Reading and writing letters (letter writing patterns, directions, geometry, slope, perpendicularity, basic form of the letter, upper and lower case)
Sensory education studies	Creating syllables from letters, words from syllables, sentences from words (words that the student can make sense of with their prior knowledge, appropriate spaces between words, use of capital letters, punctuation marks, interrogative particles)
Breath and rhythm exercises	Reading text
Verbal and nonverbal language skills	Independent reading and writing (oral and silent reading, correct pronunciation, stress intonation, meaningful reading, reading in chorus, speaking on the text, etc., correct pronunciation, fluency, distinguishing sounds, etc.)

The skills related to early writing in the preschool education program and the first-grade Turkish lesson curriculum are compared in Table 12. Studies in preschool in relation to perception, auditory perception, attention and memory, the key concept, problem-solving and estimation, pencil holding skills, literacy awareness and motor development, sensory training, breath and rhythm exercises, and verbal and non-verbal language skills development are emphasized. It is seen that these studies show integrity in terms of socio-cultural, cognitive, psycho-motor, and linguistics, and in this period, children's early writing skills are developed and their readiness for primary school is ensured. With these developed skills, it is aimed that a

child who attends primary school respectively acquires the skills of first literacy preparation, first literacy initiation and progress, and independent reading and writing based on the Turkish lesson program. Considering these skills, it is expected that children will have developed the skills to independently construct a text and complete the writing process, by working on listening skills, developing finger, hand, and arm muscles, painting and drawing, feeling, recognizing, and distinguishing the sound, reading and writing the letter, creating syllables from letters, words from syllables, sentences from words. Both programs show continuity in the context of writing skills and enable children to develop early writing skills step by step with the proposed activities.

4. RESULTS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Supporting early writing skills is regarded as an important factor affecting the future academic success of children in the literature (Aboud & Hossain, 2011) and is of great importance in the transition from pre-school institutions to primary school. Based on the study of Erkan and Kırca (2010) with young children, it was stated that the cognitive and language skills of children with pre-school experience developed foundational reading and writing skills in this period, and thus their school readiness levels were higher than their peers. In this period, the teaching of writing in preschool and primary schools is implemented within a number of contextual constraints that may have a certain effect on "how children decide on the appropriateness of the information, how they create meaning in the texts they write, the way they express themselves or the effect they want to create" (Graham, MacArthur, & Fitzgerald, 2013, p. 384). In this study, the pre-school education program and the first grade part of the Turkish lesson curriculum, which are the most obvious of these contextual restrictions, affect the transition period and school readiness was examined in terms of the continuity of supported writing skills.

Considering the findings of the research, it was revealed that the aim of increasing awareness of writing developed in the pre-school period turned into a writing habit in the primary school period. According to Puranik and Lonigan (2014), early writing consists of related but distinct skills: procedural knowledge, conceptual knowledge, and generative knowledge. Procedural knowledge includes copying skills (Berninger & Chanquoy, 2012), line-making skills, and orthography, and the ability to identify and write sounds in words (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2012); conceptual knowledge consists of children's understanding of concepts related to written text and writing-related concepts such as linearity and direction of writing (Puranik & Lonigan, 2011); and productive knowledge includes children's word choices and the process of generating ideas for writing purposes (Kaderavek, Cabell, & Justice, 2009). Based on the results of the research, it is seen that these skills that children develop in the early period and at the beginning of the primary school years are handled in two education programs in a harmonious and mutually supportive process. Further, several studies have documented early writing skills and teaching writing in children's transition from preschool to primary school and noted that children are involved in more advanced literacy activities when they pass to primary school (Mackenzie, 2014).

The programs in this study suggest that the early writing objectives of the preschool education program are addressed with a game-based approach, while the writing objectives in the primary school are learning-oriented. According to Bingham, Quinn, and Gerde (2017), experiences directly related to written production influencing children's writing development most are play-based. Teachers' focus on learning opportunities combined with daily tasks and experiences and combining writing with fun learning opportunities will allow the child to interact with writing and internalize the writing and play experience (Bingham G. E., Quinn, McRoy, Zhang, & Gerde, 2018). In this context, the results of this study illustrate that the preschool education program provides the opportunity for teachers to involve children in writing instruction, which is meaningful for their interests and development. In their study of first and fourth graders' writing skills in primary school, Wagner et al. (2011) claimed that macro-organization (organization of topics and thoughts), productivity (variety of words used in writing), complexity (average sentence length, syntactic density), fluency (in a timed task), and accuracy (spelling and punctuation) are the most functional dimensions for understanding the texts of these children. Comparison of the findings with those of other studies confirms that these dimensions are similar to the learning objectives included in the primary school Turkish lesson curriculum.

Based on the research findings, writing skills supported through learning centers in the classroom, nature-based environments outside the classroom, and field trips with a wide range of materials and activities in the preschool period were exemplified only by indoor and on-desk activities in the Turkish lesson curriculum. Considering the age group, children are still at the age of play both in the pre-school period and in the primary school (Sandberg, 2011). Play is not only a way for children to entertain but also an essential tool for their learning, internalization, and development (Nolan & Paatsch, 2018). Due to the fact that the play needs of children in primary school are ignored in a curriculum that directs and guides teachers and superficial explanations have created a significant discontinuity between the two programs. Playing, which has lost its importance in primary school education in many countries in the world, has come to the agenda again to support children's learning, especially in the subjects of language and literacy, and the benefits of the play-based approach in primary school classrooms have begun to be evaluated (Reynolds, Stagnitti, & Kidd, 2011). In Turkey, Özyürek and Çavuş's (2016) study, in which primary school teachers used the play as a teaching method, determined that the participant teachers are keen to implement a play-based teaching method in the lessons, but they needed pre-service and in-service training and support about the play-based curriculum. In this context, the necessity of the primary school literacy curriculum to both support teachers emerges which should highlight play-based activities, materials, and approaches that will support the development of children.

When the preschool education program and the Turkish lesson curriculum are examined based on the developmental area and achievements of early writing skills, it is seen that the aim is to develop children's foundational academic skills in the pre-school period, thus supporting children's writing skills in socio-cultural, cognitive, linguistic and psycho-motor areas and preparing them for primary school. In the primary school period, it was determined that the transition process of children to literacy learning was completed by making these skills more comprehensive. Therefore, children should not experience a discontinuity in this period, the transition period should be evaluated well, and these programs should be compatible with the teaching outcomes. According to Marsh (2006), the gap between what is expected and required to be done in preschool and the first years of primary school and what is expected in terms of writing outcomes means that it can be difficult for teachers to strike a balance between their beliefs and classroom practices. The teaching of writing in primary school, together with the overcrowded classroom environments, the social expectations of the family, society and administrative management, and the pressure to show progress in terms of learning, can result in a practice that is against both the beliefs that teachers have gained and shaped in the educational environment in which they grow up and the official education policy (Ozturk, 2011). The findings of this study demonstrate that while designing the learning-teaching environment and lesson plans of teachers, instead of inadequate support caused by the traditional teaching approach (Sünbül, 2010), individual differences are prioritized, process-oriented, interpersonal and self-communication skills are supported, a child-centered and holistic program is emphasized. In this way, the difference between practice and expectations will be minimized and writing skills that develop during the transition period from preschool to primary school will positively reflect on their experiences.

The findings of this study broadly support the work of other studies in this area arguing that the process of learning and teaching writing is challenging and complex and that this process is based on the development of many skills. According to Mackenzie and Veresov (2013), the act of writing itself, as a way of expression and communication, progresses with the development of social, emotional, and language skills, as well as the interaction of cognitive and physical factors. At the same time, although it is a foundational skill that affects children's literacy, it leaves a lasting effect on all academic achievements (Myhill & Jones, 2009; Christianakis, 2011; Graham & Harris, 2009). The results of this study indicate that pre-school writing skills are organized to support the skills that are described as early writing skills of children in the literature, by giving importance to studies on: visual perception studies (Hayes JR, 1996), phonological awareness studies (Puranik & Lonigan, 2014), attention and memory studies (Negro & Chanquoy, 2005), basic concept studies (Shagoury, 2009), problem-solving and estimation studies (Deane, et al., 2008), pencil use and manual dexterity studies (Alamargot & Fayol, 2009), studies on literacy awareness (Reutzel, Mohr, & Cindy, 2019), sensory experiences, breath and rhythm exercises (Kempert, et al., 2016), and the development of verbal and non-verbal language skills (Jones, 2015). In the primary school period, writing skills were organized through a stage-based approach (Mackenzie, 2011), which started with fine-motor development (Mackenzie & Veresov, 2013) and sound recognition activities in the first literacy preparation, and progressed with developing independent reading and writing skills such as recognizing the sound-letter relationship (Drouin & Harmon, 2009), conventional writing skills (Christensen, 2009), punctuation marks (Jones, 2015), syllable, word and sentence formation (Berman, 2014). This approach, which divides the development of writing in primary school into stages, has been discussed in many different contexts, such as cognitive writing theories (Hayes & Flower, 1980a) and socio-cultural theories (Galbraith & Rijlaarsdam, 1999). As a result, it was discussed that the act of writing is not a process consisting of stages that follow the same order for all children, but on the contrary, owing to the interactions established between the person performing the writing act and the outside world, each individual develops writing differently in relation to their daily lives (Dyson, 2002). For this reason, the programs developed in the primary school period should offer content for children to establish meaningful relationships with their daily lives, taking into account their individual differences, rather than limiting writing skills to stages. This study confirms that this aspect of the primary school curriculum on writing skills should be improved.

This study covered only the early writing skills in the Preschool Education Program and the sections related to writing skills in the Turkish Lesson Curriculum; however, the activity books used in these education stages or the curricula prepared for other courses were not examined. It will be useful to gather and examine these documents for future studies. Within the scope of the study, issues showing continuity or discontinuity were specified, but how these programs reflect on the classroom environment is not examined, which can be seen as a limitation. It would also be useful to examine how these programs affect writing skills in face-to-face studies with educators, children, and families.

Other activities that will cover children's skills such as fine motor skills, phonological awareness, and vocabulary development influencing children's foundational and later writing skills can also be associated with writing development. No data on these activities were included in this study. This can be considered as another limitation of the study. In the future, it can be suggested that studies that include related activities should be carried out.

Research and Publication Ethics Statement

This article was designed and conducted as completely original research and was sent to the relevant journal after being reported with its results. It has not been submitted in any symposium, congress, etc., or sent to another journal for consideration. Since this study consisted of two program books prepared by the Ministry of National Education and any human or animal participants/subjects were not included, an ethics committee review was not required, however all relevant guidelines stated in the 6th edition of the APA (American Psychological Association) has been complied with and the ethical principles and publication policy of the journal.

Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

This research was prepared by a single author.

Statement of Interest

There is no conflict of interest for this study.

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