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**Effects of Twitter on EFL Students' Academic Success in Writing**

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**ABSTRACT**

It is a well-known the fact that microblogging has gradually increased its popularity all over the world since the launch of Twitter in 2006. Nevertheless, research on the effects of the site on language learning keeps paltry. Today's learners who were born after roughly 1980 are called 'digital native' (Prensky, 2001), and they are exposed to digital technology more than eight hours a day. Bearing this fact in mind, we as teachers, who are named 'digital immigrants', had better catch up with them one way or another. Twitter, well- appreciated microblogging site by young generations, is examined in this study to clarify its effects on English language learners' academic success. Because of the nature of the site, writing activities and learners' academic success on writing are addressed through the study. This particular study is designed as an experimental one in which 63 prep class students of a state university in Turkey constituted experimental and control group. The students in the experimental group were asked to follow instructions, 'Twitter hashtags' which were given by the teacher in the light of the courses covered in the class for ten weeks. For example, with #DreamJobs heading, the students were required to write English sentences about their dream jobs, and throughout the study, the teacher provided immediate feedback to those sentences. The control group students continued their usual learning process without any intervention of Twitter use. Writing achievement test was implemented both to the experimental and the control group at the beginning and end of the term. Pre and post test scores of the students were analyzed by using T-test scale in SPSS. The results emerged at the end of the study revealed substantial effects of Twitter use on EFL students' overall academic success in writing. Accordingly, Twitter use is highly recommended to be implemented into the curriculum.

**Key Words:** Microblogging, Twitter, English language learning, writing performance, academic success.

## 1. Introduction

This study focuses on writing skills of FFL learners because of the fact that most of the time writing improvement process of students may include tedious assignments in and out of the class. During this progress students might lose motivation, which can affect classroom environment and even teacher motivation. Checking all the students writing phases one by one personally and giving feedback to each draft require immense patience, as well. There should emerge an alternative way of checking writings and giving immediate feedback without affecting class hours and consuming class time. Bearing all these facts in mind, this study is believed to lead a new way to cope with writing deficiencies and turn this agonizing process into more demanding and interactive way thanks to the dynamic, joyful and active nature of such social micro blogging site in this case, Twitter.

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### 1.1. Statement of the Problem

It is usually an uphill task for EFL students to get motivated and to start writing no matter how we try as teachers. They lack necessary confidence and enthusiasm to express their ideas in written format. EFL students generally find writing activities tedious in the class. For this reason, this study aimed to encourage EFL students to write and to be interactive as much as possible even outside of the class time.

Twitter is implemented to language learning process because of its dynamic and easy use. When the study was being carried out, it might be perceived as a medium for short communications since messages are limited to 140 characters. However, active tweeters may make multiple tweets on a given day. Besides, Twitter users have been using 280 characters since September 2017. Unlike discussion boards, blogs and chat, Twitter allows users to create pathways so that messages can be directed toward one person (@), be privately viewed (Direct Message), or be retweeted (RT), i.e. shared with others (Lomicka & Lord, 2012). Due to its collaborative, dynamic, continuous and interactive features of Twitter which bring the students together like in a circle, this activity was called 'Tweet Circle' by the researcher.

### 1.2. Aim and Scope of the Study

The present study aims to find out the effects of social media usage, Twitter being on the focus, on the development of writing skills of EFL students. Ultimate goal is to observe any possible contributions of using Twitter in terms of EFL students' academic success in writing courses by exploring effectiveness of giving immediate feedback to students and eliciting the progress of EFL students' writing skills instead of assessing one final written production of the students at the end of the term.

### 1.3. Research Questions

In the light of the aim of the study, following research question is formulated to examine mentioned concerns from several perspectives.

- How does the use of Twitter affect students' academic success in writing?

### 1.4. Limitations and Suggestions

Findings of the study should be interpreted in the context of its potential limitations. It may be misleading to generalize the results because of the restrictions on the sample size and research duration. Future studies that will be carried out for longer time with more participants in a larger context, can give more detailed information about Twitter effects on other language skill developments in EFL settings. Several specific writing components such as punctuation, word order, use of connectors etc. are required to be examined within this scope in detail. Likewise, various language skills such as reading skill via Twitter need to be focused. Vocabulary learning via Twitter is also a promising research area to which students might pay substantial attention. Likewise, further investigation into the potential benefits of using Twitter versus other appropriate social media tools to enhance student engagement, learning, and success is needed. The effects of Facebook and Twitter can be compared with respect to the writing skill development of EFL students.

This study was carried out with beginner level EFL prep class students at a state university. Further studies with different age group students such as college or primary school students and proficiency levels like intermediate level could be conducted to see whether Twitter usage has different effects on them. Likewise, it might be of interest to carry out a longitudinal research to see if the results will be consistent when Twitter is utilized for a long term with the same EFL learners.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Digital Solstice in Language Learning**

Web 2.0 tools (such as blogs, wikis, and social networking sites), which were mostly created and popularized in the early 21st century, have provided a platform where ordinary Internet users can not only read but also easily write, publish, and share their own content with other users (O'Reilly, 2005; Throne, Black & Sykes, 2009; Warschauer & Grimes, 2007). As a result, these tools gave rise to the emergence of more communicative information share on the internet. With the Web 2.0, the space of consumption, creation, sharing of information and knowledge which can arise simultaneously has broken a new ground. In this unfamiliar environment, internet users found more chances to express themselves to people who are either known or unknown. In addition, the media of content creation are not limited to written text anymore. Web 2.0 environments also support multimodal ways of meaning making process, such as posting and distributing images, audio tracks, and videos. Likewise, Benito-Ruiz (2009) identifies Web 2.0 as "Web as read-write," "Web as platform," "Web of anyone willing to try," and "Web as dynamic" (p. 65). This is a clear indicator of a new area in communication and learning in which information flow turns into an active incidence from a passive one. Over the twenty years, improvement of Web 2.0 has shifted traditional ways in learning to a more dynamic way of digital solstice in every field. Today, we encounter situations in which learners have a grasp of digital tools better than tutors. Even little children at the age of 4 or 5 can easily learn and use these technological devices. These situations leave instructors no other way than catching up with recent development and being techno-savvy as it may even be seen inevitable in most cases. As a result of widespread usage of these Web 2.0 and improving communities for writing such as blogs, podcasts and wikis, writing process in language learning has gone beyond the classroom nowadays. One can easily write and at the same time receive feedback from a tutor without the need of face to face communication. Now, there is no need to devote considerable time for feedback sessions. Instead, thanks to blogs and e-portfolios, whole writing practice is available which enhance students' writing outside the classroom walls.

### **2. 2. Computer- Assisted Language Learning (CALL) and Academic Success in Writing**

Computer- Assisted Language Learning (CALL) is a term used by teachers and students to describe the use of computers as part of a language course (Hardisty & Windeatt, 1989). As a matter of fact, computers have been used for language teaching ever since the 1960's. However, it was not until 1990's that CALL became integrative thanks to the emergence of internet. According to Lee (2000), implemented and network-based CALL contributes significantly to the following features in learning process; (1) Experiential Learning, (2) motivation, (3) enhanced student achievement, (4) authentic materials for study, (5) greater interaction, (6) individualization, (7) independence from a single source of information, (8) global understanding (p. 1- 8).

After the first half of the 20th century, educational technologies have become one of the most developed fields in the world. Before this technological era, traditional teaching materials were grammar books and dictionaries which were supported by workbooks, cue cards, charts, newspapers, posters and picture cards. However, now they are supported by other media tools, such as radio, television, slides, OHP, video tapes, games, toys, realias, as well as computers, multimedia assistants and the Internet. Recently, computers have managed to enter almost every school all around the world and still maintain their upmost position. What is more about computers is that they keep improving. They have become more powerful, faster, easier to use, more convenient and cheaper, and they can also process and store much more data comparing with the previous versions. As a result of widespread use of the internet, computer-mediated communication has reshaped the foreign language learning atmosphere in the class. Including Turkey, CALL is used routinely in foreign language instruction in highly developed countries to provide supplementary practices in the four skills writing, reading, speaking and listening, as well as grammar and problem solving activities (Gündüz, 2005). EFL teachers can easily adopt these practices into their lesson as the mainstay of a course, or to back up, to make revision, to use as a reinforcement or extension, to present a sound in the form of speech, music or other audio-output. The most common means of communication with the computer is by clicking on icons with the mouse or by typing commands and responses at a keyboard (Higgins, 1995). Nowadays, many school administrators adopt software systems running at computer labs. By making unique combinations while interacting in language laboratories, computers provide considerable learner motivation as well. There are many writing programs for foreign English learners which are available out of charge on the internet. Type Fu, OmmWriter Dana, Online Dictation, Google Keyboard, Angel Writer, FocusWriter and Word Processing Program are among some examples for which computers are used. The aims of those mentioned programs are regarded as highly influential to start to work with CALL. To use these kinds of programs, learners have to be familiar with the keyboard of the computer, and they also have to learn such kind of functions as follows:

- How to start a word processor
- How to delete and insert a letter, a word or a larger chunk of text
- How to save text
- How to print a text
- How to move words, lines, sentences, etc. around.

These programs transform the computer into a sophisticated and flexible writing aid that can improve not only the learners' writing skills, which leads to academic success but also their attitude toward writing. By the same token, they can provide useful practice for guided and free writing in foreign language learning. Last but not least, learners can make use of these programs without the need of using a pen and paper. Writing is a productive skill which requires learners to organize an idea and produce a new concept. The most important thing about this skill is that it cannot be separated from other language skills. According to Duber (as cited in Gündüz, 2005), vocabulary, grammar, punctuation and reading texts have an obvious relevance to the sub-skills that are needed for writing. The computer manages to stimulate both writing and speaking activities for example; while doing a listening activity, the learners can write at the same time, which may contribute to dictation as well. These writing programs have plenty of varieties, and each day computers continue to evolve to make most of their usage.

### 2. 3. Micro-blogging in Education (MIE)

Microblogging is a broadcast medium that exists in the form of blogging. A microblog differs from a traditional blog in that its content is typically smaller in both actual and aggregated file size by which users can post brief and often frequent updates online (<http://techterms.com/definition/microblogging>). Microblogging lets people write short text updates about their lives on the go and send them to friends and interested observers via text messaging, instant messaging, email or the web, which also allows users to exchange small elements of content such as short sentences, individual images, or video links (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). There is a well-known fact that it is preferable to tell more by using fewer sentences. The most important thing in a communication is the quality, not the quantity. During social communication, it is better to be as clear and concise as possible, so we can say that using microblogging tools may be catchier and more memorable for the learners of English.

### 2. 4. What is Twitter?

Twitter - the micro blogging and social networking- was founded on 21 March, 2006. As of June 2018, there were approximately 330 million monthly active users of Twitter (Twitter, Inc., n.d.) and nearly 11.5 million of them are Turkish people which equals to 14 percent of total population of Turkey. Twitter was originally fashioned to allow users to send "small bursts of information," known as "tweets," about daily events to other users of the service (Twitter, Inc., n.d.). Tweets that people write to discuss several topics appear in reverse chronological order on the home page of a person. When the hash "#" symbol is located before a subject or keyword, 'Hashtags' are designated, and all tweets can be seen at one page at the same time above the same hashtag. First-hand use of Twitter, practitioner-oriented articles and empirical research suggest three primary uses of Twitter in education: communication, class activities, and professional development. Educators and students of any field can easily interact with a variety of people in new ways thanks to its brevity, immediacy, and openness (Carpenter & Krutka, 2014). Carpenter and Krutka (2014) claim that the interaction in traditional classroom is foreseeable, which may make the communication dull and less enjoyable. However, using a digital kind of a communication like using Twitter in the class may boost students' motivation and willingness. Educators prized Twitter for its personalized and immediate nature, and many considered Twitter to be superior to traditional professional development. This paves way to the fact that Twitter as a micro blogging site can be used for educational purposes (Carpenter & Krutka, 2014).

Some studies (Honeycutt & Herring, 2009; Java, 2007) enlighten that Twitter can be effectively used for conversation, daily chatter, reporting news, sharing information of URLs as a supplement vehicle to education. If learners become aware of the advantages of using Twitter, they can be motivated to use it in their daily lives as well. In like manner, Grosseck and Holotesco (2008) argue that the incorporation of microblog models with good pedagogy can be responsive to a student's learning needs. Specifically, they argue that Twitter can change the classroom dynamics and acts as a useful tool to share information. Maintaining relationships, supporting learning, writing concisely for an audience, addressing issues in a timely fashion, and connecting classmates and instructors are among the other instructional benefits of Twitter according to Dunlap and Lowenthal (2009). Additionally, Junco et al. (2010) claim in their empirical study that Twitter can impact student engagement and grades, and encourage the faculty to be more active and participatory. This study shows how Twitter

can be leverage to support students' academic and psychosocial development. Likewise, West et al. (2015) suggest that Twitter has a positive impact on students' performance and perceptions of their learning experiences concluding from their studies' overall results. West et al. (2015) also assume that thanks to the extension of traditional teaching and learning environment, students have unique opportunities to enhance their university experience, both from engagement, learning and community-connectedness perspectives. In the same way, Kollovic (2011) notes the words of a language professor whose students use Twitter as a language learning tool. The language professor states that using Twitter does help students to extend their learning outside of the classroom and encourage them to use the target language more often. Furthermore, Wakefield et al. (2011) find that Twitter can assist students to increase understanding of course materials as supported by the interactive environment and affiliated rapid feedback. In their research, Junco, Elavsky and Heiberger (2013) highlight some effective elements of integrating Twitter into college courses and they assume these statements: '1) requiring students to use Twitter as part of the course is important in affecting academic outcomes, 2) Twitter should be integrated into the course in educationally relevant ways and 3) faculty engagement on the platform is essential in order to impact students' outcomes' (p. 273). These ideas indicate that we can get maximum benefit from Twitter use when a more professional approach is adopted by teaching authorities. Acosta (2014) likens Twitter as being the socializing coffee table of the 1990s by establishing a community of participation that continues when people are no longer together. Acosta (2014) also draws attention to the fact that it is important to assist students while they are using Twitter in education to have them truly connected, to build social community, and to create bonding networks that lead to academic success. Although seen as useless and empty site by many when it was first established because users wrote every emotion, thought and situation that would come into their minds, Twitter then proved its superior features in every field of cultural, economy, educational, commercial, political, and environmental aspects (McFedries, 2007; Ovadia, 2009). Despite the limitation of characters which was seen as a negative feature at first, it is proven that this limitation causes users to write messages that are more concise, and makes ideas expressed by individuals to be more purposeful which can be produced through a variety of devices anytime and anywhere (Asphen & Thorpe, 2009; Lee & Chan, 2006; Wright 2010). It should be reminded that this so called character limitation surpassed with the expansion of 280 characters in September 2017.

#### **2.4.1. Twitter in EFL Classes**

Some studies (Acar & Kimura, 2012; Kim, 2010) reveal the fact that Twitter has notable effects on learners of any languages. It creates sense of community among users, as well. In their pioneer study which is conducted with Chinese EFL students, Borau et al. (2009) enlighten that it is suitable to train communicative and culture competence anytime anywhere without face-to-face interaction by assuming that input by Twitter is readily available in numerous forms on the Internet. According to Borau et al. (2009), what learners of English need is the chance of actively producing language as well as the chance of using English as tool of communication. This advantage of Twitter removes the restrictions especially emerging from time and place of the learning. Instead, it helps learners to use different kinds of media tool while learning a new subject and it also gives learners the chance to learn and share wherever and whenever they want by using the dynamism in learning. The only obstacle may be the reluctance of the students. If, on the other hand, the students want and like to use Twitter in their social lives, there is no point in seeing Twitter as a waste of time because many studies proved its favorable impact on learning. Moreover, in her study, Kim (2010) reveals that Twitter enables

students of all ages to practice good writing and provides a reasonable opportunity for them to use English spontaneously for authentic purposes. In another study by Kim et al. (2011), it is concluded that Twitter stimulates learners to increase their L2 English output and help them to maintain social interaction with other learners using the target language regardless of their grade levels. As we all know, Twitter is a common platform in which any type of information is shared at any time by anybody, so everyone can find something he/ she likes on Twitter. Also, you do not need to be a language expert to communicate on Twitter, so language proficiency levels and grades of the learners are not quite imperative. Similarly, in their research, Acar and Kimura (2012) claim that Twitter can be very useful as a tool for language practice especially in non-English speaking countries. They collected and analyzed the tweets of 70 Japanese EFL learners and come up with the results that Japanese EFL learners post mostly greetings and daily-life related tweets and also frequently respond to other language learners' messages. According to their notable findings, learners feel like they have to do more and more to catch up with their friends through Twitter by communicating with each other or by reading their tweets. Twitter's searching engine tool (#), the hash symbol, makes the most of itself to catch attention of learners. According to a recent study by Yolcu (2013), using a hashtag starting with the symbol (#) encourages the users to think and write tweets on the same subject title. By the same token, hashtags have the potential to play a key role in supporting the sense of belonging and keeping the conscious of being a community member alive when they are properly and effectively used (Yolcu, 2013). The sense of community which is built through Twitter clearly shows itself during social events. Nowadays, there are many examples of people's coming together to celebrate or protest something after organizing themselves on Twitter. These incidences show the potential of using Twitter.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Research Design and Participants

63 prep class students of Osmaniye Korkut Ata University participated in the study and their ages range between 18 and 21. At the beginning of the fall term of 2016- 2017 academic year, they were enrolled to optional preparatory classes from different faculties such as Faculty of Engineering, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences. In the School of Foreign Languages in OKU, the classes are named after some prominent cities from all around the world by the administration and colleagues. In this study, participants from Group Sydney, Rome, New York and Prague were included. The number of students in each group is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Numbers of the Students in the Experimental and the Control Groups

Names	Experimental Group		Control Group	
	Grp Sydney	Grp Rome	Grp New York	Grp Prague
Numbers	20	13	16	14

As seen in Table 1, the participant students were in four separate classes, which randomly formed the experimental and control groups. The number of the participants was approximately 15 for each group. Their proficiency levels were similar to each other as a result of placement test which had been applied by The School of Foreign Languages at the beginning of the first term. All the groups had the same courses of 24 hours per week in total (i.e. Main Course, Listening and Speaking, Reading and Writing and Worksheet). Nevertheless, Main Course lesson was chosen for this study, which was

given in 12 hours a week by the same teacher who is also the researcher of this study. The lessons were taught in accordance with the syllabus of course book (i.e. Big Picture B1- B1+ by Richmond).

### 3.2. Instruments and Procedure

This particular study is designed as an experimental one to examine the extent of the students' academic success in writing after the implementation of 'Tweet Circle' activity, which the researcher calls the experiment as so. In this activity, the aim is to engage students in writing with Twitter use. As instruments, pre and post achievement tests were conducted to see whether there are any statistical differences between the experimental and the control groups' writing levels after the implementation of Tweet Circle activity to EFL courses. Writing achievement test (see Appendix 1) was prepared by the researcher to identify the differences between the scores of the EFL students who used Twitter and the students who did not. It comprised four sections which consist of punctuation, vocabulary, sentence and paragraph parts. As a result of piloting study with a group that was not included in this study, each part was reported to have clear instructions. The level and content of the test were also edited by the testing office of OKU School of Foreign Languages. Pre achievement test was applied during the first week of the Second Term. The scores were double-checked by two colleagues and recorded by the researcher to be analyzed later. When the study was completed, the post achievement tests were given to both the experimental and the control groups. Their double-checked scores were compared using SPSS 22 (IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA).

Application of the procedure took places in following steps; initially, four classes were assigned randomly to form the experimental and the control groups at the beginning of the term. Each group was comprised of two classes. All of the classes were provided with 12 hours Main Course lessons per week by the same teacher who was also the researcher of this study. The control group did writing activities within standard take home and in-class manner, whereas the experimental group was introduced to Twitter and encouraged to use it at least three times a week as a writing activity. After the group identification, the writing achievement pre-test was given to the students of both control and the experimental groups. Their scores were kept by researcher to be compared with those of post-test. The first two weeks of the study were completed with the basic internet and Twitter usage introduction. A power point slide was prepared by the researcher and demonstrated to all the students in the experimental group. After that, they were taken to the computer laboratory for the consolidation of the introduction during the first two weeks. After they started to get used to Twitter, the researcher created titles (#hashtags) according to the course book each week (i.e. Big Picture B1- B1+ by Richmond). According to the titles the researcher gave, the students produced sentences at any time they want without time and place limitations. Thanks to the interactive nature of Twitter, besides receiving immediate feedback, the students could reply to each other's tweets. During the eight-week-implementation period, the students' tweet production was closely tracked by the researcher. Related hashtags that were created by the researcher such as #iflwonthelottery (week 4), #WhenSpringComes, #BeforeMobile (week 10). At the end of the second term, the post-test was taken by the students in both groups.



### 3. 3. Analysis

The statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS 22 in this study. The achievement tests were double checked by the researcher and a colleague. Firstly, the pre-test scores of the control and experimental group were compared so as to find the writing levels of the students at the very beginning of the study. After that, the pre and post test results of the experimental group were compared by using pair sampled t-test in order to figure out possible alterations in writing performances of the students at the end of the study. As a final stage, in order to find an answer to the research question, post achievement test scores of the control and experimental group were compared to see whether there was a significant difference between the scores.

### 4. Findings

To find an answer to the research question, achievement pre and post tests were applied to the experimental and control group students to see whether there would be any significant difference between those groups' writing scores as a result of Twitter usage. To do this, the analysis of achievement pre-test results of the two groups was compared initially to find out whether there was a significant difference between the achievement levels of the two groups before the treatment the results of which are presented in Table 2:

**Table 2.** *Independent Sample T-test Analysis for Achievement Pre-test Scores*

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t	p
Experimental	33	27.06	10.71	61	1.67	.105
Control	30	32.20	13.97			

According to Table 2, the experimental group and the control group include 63 EFL students in total. The results show that the participant students in the experimental group showed slightly lower achievement than those in the control group before the treatment. As seen in Table 9, the mean pre-test score of the experimental group is calculated as 27.06 and for the control group it is 32.20. While the standard deviation of the experimental group is 10.71; the standard deviation of the control group is calculated as 13.97, which means there is not a statistically significant difference between pre-test scores of the experimental and control groups as the T- test demonstrates. ( $p = .105$ ;  $p > .05$ ). In other words, they have almost equal achievement levels before the treatment. In order to sort out any difference of the experimental group students' writing performances, paired sample t-test analysis was also conducted. The pre- and post-achievement-test results of the experimental group were compared by using this t-test analysis, the results of which are shown in Table 3:

**Table 3.** *Paired Sample T-test Analysis for the Achievement Pre-test and Post-test Scores within Experimental Group*

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t	p
Pre	33	27.06	10.71	32	-10.22	.000
Post	33	46.48	14.14			

According to the writing scores demonstrated in Table 3, the difference between the pre and post test scores of the experimental group is significant. The pretest mean score is calculated as 27.06 which is lower than the post-test mean score which is calculated as 46.48. The difference is statistically

significant ( $p = .000$ ;  $p < .001$ ). In other words, academic success of the experimental group increased after the treatment. It can be deduced that this difference could be concluded as a result of Twitter activities carried out during the term, but to see more precise findings, we should focus on the post achievement tests scores of both experimental and control groups. To figure out any differences between these groups' writing scores, the post achievement tests of both groups were analyzed by Independent Sample T-test. The differences between the scores of two groups at the end of the term are presented in Table 4:

**Table 4.** *Independent Sample T-test Analysis for Achievement Post-test Scores*

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Df	t	p
Experimental	33	46.48	14.14	61	-2.43	.018
Control	30	37.50	15.10			

As it is shown in Table 4 above, the mean post-test score of the experimental group is calculated as 46.48, while it is calculated as 37.50 for the control group. Though the Standard deviation score of the experimental group is 14.14, it is calculated 15.10 for the control group. The results reported in Table 4 reveal that there is a statistically significant difference between the post-achievement test scores of the two groups ( $p = .018$ ;  $p < .05$ ). Therefore, it is possible to say that the experimental group has a higher achievement level, which can be called as academic success, than the control group after being exposed to different activities provided via Twitter during the experiment. All those scores were listed in Table 5 to make the differences clearer.

**Table 5.** *The Mean Scores of Experimental and Control Groups for Pre and Post Achievement Tests*

Group	Scores	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean difference
Experimental	Pre-Test	33	27.06	10.71	18.88
	Post- Test	33	46.48	14.14	
Control	Pre-Test	30	32.20	13.97	5.30
	Post- Test	30	37.50	15.10	

Table 5 shows the number of the participants, the arithmetic mean (test scores out of 100 points) for the pre and post tests and standard deviation of writing achievement for the experimental and control group participants, as well as the arithmetical difference between the pre-test and the post-test mean scores for both groups. As can be seen, the mean difference for the experimental group is 18.88 and 5.30 for the control group. The 'mean difference' scores indicate that the experimental group outperformed the control group in the writing achievement post-test.

## 5. Discussion

The results provided substantial effects of Twitter usage on students' academic success in EFL writing courses. The results supported the previous literature (Junco et al., 2013; West et al., 2015) focusing on the effects of Twitter on language learning. As a result of the achievement tests, which did not have any statistical differences at the beginning of the term as it is seen in Table 9, there appeared a statistical difference in the post achievements of the experimental group students' scores. It is possible to say that the experimental group had a higher achievement level than the control group after being exposed to different writing activities provided via Twitter during the experiment (see Table 11). As Junco et al. (2011) claim in their empirical study, Twitter impacts student engagement and grades thus making them to be more active and participatory in the class. They also state that encouraging the use of Twitter for educationally relevant purposes has a positive effect on students' grades.

Likewise, the participant students' grades in the experimental group increased more than the grades of the control group at the end of the study because they became more practical in their writing with this study (see Table 12). Like previous studies (Junco et al., 2013; Thoms & Eryılmaz, 2015; West et al., 2015), the current study showed how Twitter can be leverage to support EFL students' academic and psychosocial development. For example, as Junco, Elavsky, and Heiberger (2013) reported, the current study highlighted the fact that making EFL students use Twitter as part of the EFL courses is influential in affecting their academic outcomes. In another research, West et al. (2015) suggest that Twitter has a positive impact on students' performance in the class and perceptions of their learning experience. They also encourage the usage of Twitter as an alternative means to the traditional teaching, which may enhance students' university experience, both from engagement, learning and community-connectedness perspectives. By integrating Twitter into the EFL courses and language learning process, it can be ensured that EFL students become more aware of their learning, which leads substantially to their academic performance. Basic natures of Twitter such as immediate response, interaction with other, search and share information, and easy-to-use traits are among the most effective factors that conclude these academic achievements, some of which are mentioned among Lahiri and Chakravarty's (2014) findings. As the current study states, the students take more responsibility to achieve more during their learning process, which supports the findings of Thoms & Eryılmaz's (2015) studies. Moreover, McGough and Salomon (2014) emphasized the importance of sharing information with peers as well. Updates, events, and emotions are all among the information that is shared with friends and followers, which may occur in a format of not just writings but images, links and videos that are used to convey things about their lives (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011). It is possible to say that all these traits of Twitter attract the students because of the fact that they already make use of these potential ways of media channels. As generally observed during the current study, the students were observed to be highly motivated in terms of sharing things about their lives with their friends (see Extract 1). Some of the students even mentioned they felt cool by using English while sharing information.

**Extract 1.** *Sharing information about their lives via Tweets in English*



When the students feel free about expressing their ideas and making use of more authentic materials of language, the process of foreign language learning enhances the chance of rising attention to more realistic consequences (Kim, 2010). As a result of this, they deliberately make use of the target language by integrating it into real life. Without being under pressure of time and place restrictions, they can produce language anytime they would like. These features of Twitter compose meaningful progress on EFL students' learning and permanent academic success all together. To sum up the, the students who embraced Twitter for writing activities outperformed the students who did not as a result of the achievement tests that were applied in this study. The differences between the scores of these achievement tests execute the influence of Twitter on the EFL students' academic success in writing.

## 6. Conclusion

Taking into consideration of contemporary situations and ever changing educational technologies, each novelty deserves to be examined in every aspect of education. This current study mainly concerned with the use of Twitter on the development of EFL students' writing performances yet more recent research is needed with respect to several skills in EFL settings.

Regardless of the teacher effort, it is usually an uphill task for EFL students to get motivated and to start writing. Most of the time, they lack necessary confidence and enthusiasm to express their ideas in a written format. EFL students generally find writing activities tedious in the class. For this reason, this thesis aimed to encourage and motivate EFL students to write via a social networking site, Twitter. Thus, the present study made an attempt to investigate the possible effects of Twitter usage on Turkish EFL students' academic success in writing courses. The comparison of the experimental and control groups' scores revealed that Twitter usage had affirmative effects on the writing success of the prep EFL students at Osmaniye Korkut Ata University, School of Foreign Languages.

In the light of the findings of the study, EFL teachers may use Twitter with their students as a means of scaffolding even outside the class. According to syllabi and course books they use, EFL teachers can integrate Twitter to EFL learning process. To benefit from the technological advances in class, this implementation may bring a foremost opportunity for educators. Apart from writing and reading, communication skills may be upgraded thanks to these means of contemporary applications. Implementation of Twitter into syllabi of such courses may provide more competencies for the learners.

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