

A Needs Analysis Study on Academic Writing Skills of Pre-Service Teachers at a Foundation University in Turkey

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the needs of pre-service teachers at the English Language Teaching (ELT) department regarding academic writing. The study was conducted with the undergraduate pre-service teachers from the first, second, and third years of ELT department in a foundation (non-profit, private) university in Istanbul, Turkey. The data of this needs study was collected through a triangulated approach. Specifically, a survey was administered to 58 pre-service teachers, followed by semi-structured interviews carried out with 13 pre-service teachers and five instructors. The findings revealed that pre-service teachers and instructors regarded organization, generating ideas, and proper language use in academic writing as the most challenging skills while a flow of ideas and reflection on different topics and themes were seen as the least difficult ones. The study offers suggestions and pedagogical implications about the academic writing skills of pre-service teachers in ELT undergraduate programs.

Keywords: pre-service teachers, needs analysis, academic writing, perceptions

Authors' Note

The findings of the present research were presented as a paper at Marmara University English Language Teaching Conference (on October 3rd-4th) in Istanbul, Turkey.

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Introduction

In today's world, the importance of English as the language of communication has increased dramatically as it allows people to communicate without borders or limitations (Crystal, 2003). English is not only a school subject but a skill that requires an extensive amount of content knowledge which facilitates learning in other subjects as well (Chen, 2016). For this reason, learning English has become an essential goal for many, people all around the world continue to learn English to reach their different goals (Lukmani, 1972). However, not all language targets are the same; they are rather differentiated by the specific purposes of the learners such as the circumstances where they are involved in and various specialties their disciplines and fields demand. Consequently, instruction of English for academic purposes (EAP) has been separated by general language acquisition as EAP requires certain skills to be facilitated to cope with academic demands (Elsaid & Nur, 2018).

Not only rising importance of English language but also the globalization of education in English has led to a need for providing academic language support since there is a still lack in scholars' and students' competence to meet the demands of their disciplines and programs. As a part of academic environment, students and academics are expected to demonstrate sophisticated academic language skills in their fields as the proficiency in academic language is regarded as the sign of overall achievement in academic context (Read, 2008). When academic success and competence are considered, academic writing knowledge is a requirement since university students' academic success is mostly based on their writing. It is also mentioned by AlHashemi, AlSubaeie and Shukri (2017) that whether students are going to be successful or unsuccessful in terms of academic performance is determined by the use of academic writing skills.

Academic writing is generally defined as all writing works created for the sake of study (Chin, Khoizumi, Reid, Wray & Yamazaki, 2012). Academic writing demonstrates someone's knowledge on a particular topic, and the aimed audience is academic people for the most of the time so that it is differentiated from the other writings in terms of purpose, audience, evidence, style, and process (Chin et al., 2012). Richards (2001) states a typical sequence of how to teach writing in a second or foreign language context as follows: familiarization, controlled writing, guided writing, and free writing. This sequence is adopted by most of the language teaching practitioners. On the other hand, there is also a common view that holds writing, especially academic writing, as one of the most challenging skills to master in a second or foreign language. The reason for this difficulty is stated as "the need of using an appropriate choice of vocabulary, sentence structure, and paragraph organization and to turn such ideas into a readable text" (Ghufuron, Saleh, Warsono & Sofwan, 2016, p.2). Based on these overviews, it is obvious that academic writing courses need to be designed carefully to meet the needs of the students to be successful with the demands of academic context and their disciplines.

Literature Review

Needs Analysis

Needs analysis is an instrument for collecting information about students' needs so that it is possible to define the target situation and study environment for teaching English (Otila,

2015). The needs analysis provides the teacher with a picture of what students lack in and what skills should be acquired by learners (Otila, 2015). How the learning process will be arranged and what principles will be adopted is defined by a needs analysis, and it consists of many sides of teaching and learning process such as students' background, students' current level of the language, their purpose of learning a language, etc. According to Benavent and Sánchez-Reyes (2015), the needs analysis starts with the target situation analysis, which focuses on the objective and product-oriented needs. It is followed by the learning situation analysis giving information about subjective needs and the means analysis for getting information on educational contexts.

Similarly, Hyland (2006) categorizes the needs analysis into present situation analysis and target situation analysis. The present situation analysis is for students' current conditions based on objective and subjective data and the target situation analysis concerns with students' roles, skills, and knowledge. The needs analysis results will shape the learning goals and are used to develop the teaching and learning process based on these goals. Therefore, it is the prominent step of curriculum design. It also helps teachers to see if learners benefit from an applied curriculum. After the needs analysis is carried out, the teacher and educator should clearly define learning objectives and goals and design the curriculum accordingly.

In brief, needs analysis is the collection and review information necessary to describe and validate objectives of the curriculum which support the language learning needs of students in the institutions that influence the situations of learning and teaching. Applying needs analysis as a part of teaching could help the learners recognize their needs and more importantly, monitor their learning.

Needs Analysis Studies on English for Academic Purposes

As EAP skills are profound for students to comprehend, instructors need to design lessons that answer the deficits of the learners so that learners can overcome challenges in their academic study (Asaoka & Usui, 2003). The best way to design lessons and get data about the learners' current academic language needs, needs analysis can be applied. The aim of needs analysis is to help learners to maximize their language learning skills in a given target context (Chen & Chang, 2016). There are several different studies to discover academic language needs of students.

In spite of the current studies on English for academic purposes, there is an ongoing debate on why undergraduate students have difficulty in mastering on those skills (Elsaid & 2018; Berman & Chang, 2001; Tseng, 2014). To address this problem, it is crucial to investigate students' needs for English for academic purposes. Elsaid and Nur (2018) conducted a study at the University of Khartoum with 150 participants and it aimed to identify the reasons for learning English, their conceptions about their current level of English, and to discover academic sub-skills they perceive to be improved. Their current English proficiency levels also were determined for the comparative purposes. The data were collected through open-ended

questions and a questionnaire. According to the results of the study, it can be argued that the participants perceived English as a way of communication to express their needs both in social and academic life. For this reason, they regarded speaking and writing as the most essential skill to improve, and they require their instructors to design activities that include speaking and writing skills more.

In Berman and Cheng's (2001) study, undergraduate students at a major Canadian university participated in research that addresses the needs analysis of the NS and NNS in higher education. In order to achieve that, the participants were given a questionnaire to investigate students' self-assessed difficulties in four language skills. The results showed that there is a correlation between self-perception and GPA scores. All participants with lower GPA scores perceived English for academic purposes more challenging to master and they added that they had difficulties to express themselves in productive skills. Furthermore, like previous research, it was observed that the NNS find productive skills more difficult than receptive skills, and they wanted to practice more on those skills.

In another study (Tseng, 2014), improving writing and communication skills were emphasized. Likert scale was used to explore the participants' perspectives and needs. The data indicated that students' main concern is to be able to communicate appropriately when they attend exhibitions or performances. Moreover, they wanted to improve their reading skills to comprehend specific and field-related reading texts about their major.

To wrap up, needs analysis plays a significant role in the design and execution of the EAP course as it identifies the learners' current and target language needs and therefore provides a solid basis for this course. Having applied the needs analysis and come up with the academic language needs of the students, the data would aid students to achieve their expected results in very successful courses.

Needs Analysis Studies on Academic Writing

There have been many needs analyses in EAP that focused mainly on academic writing skills (Huang, 2010; Leki & Carson, 1994; Lung et al., 2014; Asaoka & Usui, 2003). The studies focused on the perspectives of the students and/or the students (Leki & Carson, 1994). One study, for instance, by Huang (2010), tried to reveal the students' and instructors' perceptions of the importance of language skills to be able to be successful academically. The results of questionnaires and open-ended surveys indicated that both the learners and the instructors value academic writing so much. Besides, they claimed that it is the most problematic skill due to its nature. Since the students need academic writing skills throughout their education, the needs analysis results shaped the curriculum.

Another research by Lung et al. (2014), focused on the students' academic writing skills needs with the aim of reconstruction of the reading classes. The participants were M.A. or PhD students who need excellent academic writing skills. The writers reported that the results

would constitute the outline of the writing courses. In Asaoka and Usui's study (2003), the problems that the college students face in terms of academic writing were addressed into three categories; internal, external, and surface-level. The research pointed out that macro-level problems like planning, organization, and conclusion stand as a major difficulty in academic writing. In addition to these studies, Shi and Fujioka's study (1998) concerned about College of Liberal Arts professors' perception of students' writing at this university, which revealed that the participants thought that the most problematic area was students' writing. It was stated that the writing skills which learners exhibited were weak.

As summarized in the previous part of this study, there have been various studies conducted on academic writing skills, and they all have shed light on the alterations needed for teaching those skills. There is no doubt that academic writing proficiency ought to be mastered by university students. It is essential to adopt and implement the necessary teaching principles and activities to improve students' proficiency in writing for academic purposes (Yundayani et al., 2017). The examination of particular learning needs concerning academic writing courses will allow finding the proper ways to learn and teach. For the sake of this, the application of questionnaires and interviews to identify academic writing needs are practical tools (Dewhurst-Belcher & Braine, 1995).

Even though needs analysis studies have approached the needs in academic writing courses by focusing on different participants and their perceptions, there still exists a gap for pre-service teachers' needs including both stakeholders of students and instructors. Therefore, the present study tried to address this gap by raising the following research questions:

1. What are the needs of pre-service teachers in Turkey in academic writing?
2. What are the perceptions of pre-service teachers of academic writing in terms of motivational source, strengths and weaknesses, and activities to be included in the related course?
3. What are the perceptions of instructors at the ELT Department of academic writing in terms of students' motivational source, strengths and weaknesses, and modifications to be done in the concerned course?

Methodology

Research Design

The present study aimed to conduct a needs analysis of pre-service teachers' academic writing skills. While doing so, it employed a mixed-method research design which is defined as a method which focuses on collecting, analyzing, and mixing both quantitative and qualitative data and using their procedures in a single study or series of studies (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Creswell and Clark (2011) point out that combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches

in researching provides broader and deeper information and each can give complementary information so that the shortcomings of one method research can be eliminated.

Participants and Setting

This study was conducted in the English Language Teaching Department at a foundation university in Istanbul, Turkey. The goal of the ELT undergraduate program is to prepare students to be eligible English teachers who can serve in every level of educational institutions and to donate them with the field – required skills and knowledge. The participants of the study were 58 pre-service teachers from the first, second, and third years of the ELT department, and 13 of them were the participants of the open-ended questions part as well.

Apart from the pre-service teachers, five ELT instructors in the institution participated in the present study and were given a questionnaire with open-ended questions. Most of the students at the department had an advanced level of English while the others were in upper – intermediate level. The undergraduate ELT students had advanced writing courses as must courses in both semesters of their freshmen year. These advanced writing courses aim to gain students the necessary skills to be able to write in different genres of academic writing and to make them familiar with the customs of writing in academic context. Additionally, the students are expected to complete academic writing tasks and assignments in most of their courses so that they have been familiar with the concept of “academic writing”. The instructors were experienced in giving academic writing courses to undergraduate students.

Data Collection Tools

The research employed a triangulation method for the data collection so that the validity of the study would be assured. Thus, the data was collected through a survey with a Likert scale for the pre-service teachers and the questionnaires with open-ended questions for both pre-service teachers and instructors at the department which are summarized in the next part of this paper.

Survey

The survey consisted of three parts: background information part, a Likert scale for pre-service teachers’ perceptions of the importance of academic writing, and a Likert scale for academic writing needs. There were two items about students’ perceptions of the importance of academic writing skills in the first scale. The Likert scale for academic writing needs was adapted from another needs analysis study on the academic skills of graduate students (Köse, Yüksel, Öztürk & Tömen, 2019). The items were about sub-skills of academic writing competence. The items had been changed into full sentences, and two additional items had been added to specify some sub-skills. In total, the survey included 14 items in two parts. The pre-service teachers were expected to choose from a scale from “5” to “1” with the labels of

“strongly agree, agree, somewhat agree, disagree and strongly disagree”. The reliability score of the new scale was calculated by using SPSS and Cronbach’s Alpha value was found to be .89.

The Questionnaire for Pre-Service Teachers

A questionnaire with open-ended questions was given to some of the pre-service teachers who had answered the Likert scale. The questionnaire included eight questions in total. The questions focused on pre-service teachers’ perceptions of their own academic writing competence.

The Questionnaire for Instructors

For the purposes of this study, a questionnaire including open-ended questions was delivered to five instructors teaching English Language Education courses. The instructors were asked five open-ended questions which aimed to find out the instructors’ opinions on the primary purpose of the academic writing course, motivation sources of the pre-service teachers, and pre-service teachers’ general needs and difficulties they face and modifications needed to be done in the academic writing course.

Data Collection Procedure

The instructors who had classes with the participants were contacted, and their consent was received in order to apply the Likert scale during their class time. The questionnaire with open-ended questions was given to pre-service teachers as written after the Likert scale since the research was carried out towards the end of the semester. In order to reach more participants, the online version of the Likert scale and the open-ended questions were also created and delivered to the participants with the help of the contacted instructors.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the Likert scale was done quantitatively. Descriptive statistics, such as the mean score, standard deviation, and median, were used to interpret the data. In order to calculate these statistics, SPSS was used.

As for the open-ended questions in the questionnaires of the instructors and the pre – service teachers, qualitative analysis was applied to interpret the answers. Qualitative data analysis is an interpretive process; the researcher is oriented to in-depth and reflective process and they try to get repeated parameters of their interpretations of the data (Clark & Creswell, 2015). To achieve that, the content analysis was done by two of the researchers. Following the data collection process, the written answers were transcribed on a Word document and meaningful parts were chosen by the researchers. Each researcher applied content analysis to reach

common codes and themes. Similar codes were placed under some categories which finally formed themes. Each researcher went over their lists and the data to check whether there was an extra or unseen code. After coding process, the lists of two researchers were compared and common themes were used to explain the findings and interpretation, which also ensured rigor of the study. The results were interpreted in order to provide a deeper understanding of the learners' essential needs and preferences and the instructors' perceptions of academic writing skills.

Findings

Survey

The data collected from the survey were analyzed through descriptive statistics to obtain information about the pre-service teachers' perceptions of the importance of academic writing skill and to determine the pre-service teachers' needs in academic writing. The results of the perception scale are given in Table 1.

Table 1
Perception Scale

Perception Items	N	M	SD
How important do you think academic writing skills are to your current undergraduate studies?	58	4.22	.937
How important do you think academic writing is to your future career in the long run?	58	4.21	1.005

The results showed that the means of participants' perceptions of the importance of academic writing in their current studies and for their future career are high (11: $M=4.22$; 12: $M=4.21$). In other words, it was reported by the pre-service teachers that the academic writing skill had a significant role in their current and future academic performance.

Table 2
Academic Writing Needs Scale

Academic Writing	N	M	SD
I need I need academic writing skills to use proper academic language	58	4.22	.974
I need I need academic writing skills to be able to choose and use appropriate vocabulary	58	4.21	.853
I need I need academic writing skills to understand the specific language features of the academic genre	58	4.10	.892
I need I need academic writing skills to write clear introductions	58	4.17	.958
I need academic writing skills to write clear thesis statements that correspond to the intended message to be delivered	58	4.33	.944
I need academic writing skills to put forward a clear and understandable claim	58	3.97	.936
I need academic writing skills to form a reasonable flow of ideas and events in the text s/he writes	58	4.05	.981
I need academic writing skills to be able to make connections among them	58	4.10	.968
I need academic writing skills to write a conclusion paragraph supporting the paper in general	58	4.26	.849

I need I need academic writing skills to write coherent and consistent explanations	58	4.14	.888
I need academic writing skills to reflect how similar topics and themes are dealt with in different writings	58	4.02	.927
I need academic writing skills to generate ideas to write by using different sources	58	4.19	.926
I need I need academic writing skills to avoid plagiarism while using different sources	58	4.31	1.012

As for the academic writing needs, the results obtained were illustrated in *Table 2*.

When the participants' answers were analyzed in regard to the academic writing needs, it was seen that the pre-service teachers needed the most to write clear thesis statements that correspond to the intended message to be delivered ($M=4.33$, $SD= .944$). The participants also stated that they also needed academic writing skills to avoid plagiarism while using different sources ($M=4.31$, $SD=1.012$), to write a conclusion paragraph ($M=4.26$, $SD= .846$) and to use proper academic language ($M=4.22$, $SD= .974$). When other items of the academic writing needs were explored as well, there were not observable serious differences among all needs for academic writing since they are related to the parts of academic writing competency.

To sum up, the findings of the study indicated that there were some certain sub-skills which were regarded by the participants as more necessary to be competent in, and these findings will be discussed in the upcoming section of the paper along with the results of qualitative data collected from the interviews.

Findings about the Questionnaire of Pre-Service Teachers

A questionnaire with eight open-ended questions was given to 13 pre-service teachers from first, second and third year students to understand their motivation to learn academic writing skills, to determine their strengths and weaknesses in terms of academic writing skills and/or strategies, and to gain an insight about their perceptions of the aim of an academic writing course and what should be included in an academic writing course.

The first question was asking the motivation of the participants to learn academic writing skills. Four categories emerged from the analysis of the first question, and the most frequent one was academic performance. Some of the pre-service teachers shared their motivations regarding academic performance as the following:

[...] I believe these skills will make me look more professional. (P7, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

[...] to be proficient for my future students. (P9, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

I want to study further; i.e., Ph.D., etc. I needed academic writing skills to write my thesis. (P13, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

The second question of the interview was exploring the difficulties the students face.

According to the results of the analysis, the two major difficulties were organization and generating ideas for the topic. Some of the participants shared their difficulties as the following:

Creating and writing thesis statements and conclusions. [...] (P7, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

Topics that are given me to write an essay about. They are usually out of my interest. [...] (P2, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

I sometimes have a hard time finding inspiration, [...] (P12, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

The question three and question four asked the participants about their strengths and weaknesses in academic writing alongside what in writing classes contributed them most in order to be a good writer for their academic writing. Various categories emerged from the analysis of these two questions; however, as seen from the sharings below, the major themes were organization and supporting ideas:

[...] Organizing ideas. Preparing an outline [...] (P5, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

[...] how to write the best examples for supporting the main ideas [...] (P4, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

I feel most confident while I'm writing about supporting my idea. (P6, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

I have learned to put my thoughts in order and writing them in a meaningful and proper way. (P8, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

The questions five, six, and seven aimed to reveal the participants' ideas regarding the aim of academic writing course, how the instructors can help the learners for being a good writer, and what kind of classroom activities would be useful for their learning. The fact that the aim of the course should be helping the students gain the overall academic writing proficiency was expressed repeatedly by the students as following:

The aim of the course should be to teach writing as a professional because it is important for our future. (P8, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

The aim should be to have "writer" students who can convey their ideas, thoughts, and feelings in a proficient way. (P9, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

In questions six and seven, guided writing, feedback, and peer-review were the most highlighted codes. As can be seen from the excerpts below, the learners think that guided writing, feedback, and peer-review are the most effective activities to enhance their academic writing skills:

Guided writing can help to make practice, and peer feedback helps to comprehend the topic better. (P5, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

[...] detailed teacher feedback would help me the most. (P7, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

[...] I enhanced my skills mostly through drafting and feedback from my teachers. (P12, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

Peer and teacher feedback and redrafting. (P10, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

As mentioned, the feedback was one of the major themes according to the analyzed data. The last question, which explores the comments of the students on written feedback, gains another meaning. The written feedback was considered useful by many participants. However, an alternative, but less frequent view was that verbal feedback is more efficient and useful. The ideas suggesting verbal feedback is more beneficial were expressed by the participants as the following:

Useful but not much as the face to face feedback. The teacher may not understand pragmatic of the student. [...] (P5, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

[...] however, verbal feedback is more useful for me. [...] (P8, Questionnaire Data, 02.05.2019)

Findings about the Questionnaire of ELT Instructors

To provide a deeper understanding of the topic, the researchers gave a questionnaire with open-ended questions to five instructors from the English Language Teaching department about academic writing courses that they provide to undergraduate students. The aim of this questionnaire was to investigate the instructors' perspective about the primary purpose of the academic writing course, motivation sources of the pre-service teachers and course and the modifications that they consider as beneficial.

The first question aimed to explore the perceptions of the instructors about the main purpose of an academic writing course at ELT undergraduate program. All of the participants expressed that writing courses are crucial for the students' academic improvement. Some of

the instructors shared their perceptions of what the aim of academic writing courses should focus on as the following:

[...] to enable students to become competent in academic writing skills as it is important to be aware of and skillfully use the academic writing conventions. (I2, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

[...] to help students improve their academic writing strategies such as writing reflective inquiry or citing references. (I3, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

[...] analyzing and producing different types of writing and writing styles: to help them in written assignments during their course work, having a good command of both general and especially academic English, analytical reading (analyzing, evaluating and synthesizing) of different genre and building up their writing skills including organizational skills and various sub-skills of writing in English and plagiarism. Apparently, students do not understand the same thing when this issue is brought up, [...] (I5, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

The second question tried to investigate the instructors' conception of the motivation level of the students. However, each of the instructors had a different opinion. Some of them argued that the students are highly motivated, while some stated that the motivation level of the students depends on previous experiences. When it comes to the source of this motivation level, the majority of the instructors argued that the attitude of the learners has a huge effect on pre-service teachers. Some of the instructors shared their opinions like the following:

[...] Pre-service teachers are not motivated because they regard this course as irrelevant to their future careers (I1, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

Some of them are highly motivated. Some are moderately motivated, and some are not. Well, I don't know exactly why but it might be related to their overall language attitude. (I2, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

[...] Some of them are motivated while the others hate it. I think it is related to their previous experience in writing and also proficiency level because if they are not proficient enough it is frustrating for them to write an academic piece. (I4, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

While another one stated as the following:

They are generally motivated as they need to develop these skills and transfer them to the other courses in the program. (I3, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

In the third question, the aim was to investigate the general perception of the instructors about the weaknesses and strengths of the students in writing courses. Various answers emerged, and all of the instructors had different opinions. One of the instructors stated that students lack in vocabulary knowledge and organizational skills. Others are stated as below:

They are weak at citing references, but they are good at writing academic summaries of simple ELT articles. (I3, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

[...] Ss are weak in terms of coming up with ideas, creative and critical writing, reflective writing and expressing their opinions in a scholarly way with an academic tone of writing. For some students, language use, spelling, and punctuation are other weaknesses. They might be strong if they are asked to write in a certain template or format. They might also use several memorized cohesive devices and phrases, which might influence their writing in a negative way at most. (I5, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

In questions four and five, the instructors were asked if the writing courses meet the needs of pre-service teachers and what modification they would make in case of offering such a course. All of them expressed that the writing course meets the needs of pre-service teachers. As for the modifications they would make, one of the instructors stated that focusing more on critical writing or reflective writing could be better to help them advance their arguments in light of academic papers, research, and the literature. Some of the instructors provide writing courses for years, and they argued that material modification would make the course more beneficial for the students. In general, they expressed their thoughts as the following:

[...] PTs should be familiarized with the writing rubric, pre-writing tasks and individual conferencing which they could incorporate into their future classes as well. (I1, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

I would add more ELT articles to provide them with some background information about their field of study. (I3, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

In addition to these, integrating automated/digital feedback tools such as [grammarly.com](https://www.grammarly.com) to reduce instructors' effort for writing tasks was mentioned by one of the instructors. S/he continued as the following:

[...] Integrating peer-feedback would benefit students in terms of critical reading & writing, text-analysis, evaluation, synthesis and more importantly this would give students a chance to experiment with giving feedback, which will support their future teaching practices, as well besides providing many opportunities for writing practice. (I5, Questionnaire Data, 08.05.2019)

In conclusion, these excerpts indicate that even though the current academic writing courses are thought to meet the needs of pre-service teachers' needs to some extent, some modifications are still possible to enhance the efficiency of it. Such excerpts demonstrate that if some improvements recommended by the pre-service teachers would be applied, their performance could improve.

Discussion

In the first section of the survey, the aim was to explore pre-service teachers' perception of how critical writing skills are. The findings showed that academic writing skills were perceived as very important for pre-service teachers' future academic and professional life. This finding was also supported by Elsaid and Nur's (2018) study as the participants addressed that writing is the most important skill to express themselves both in academic and social life. Since having academic writing skills is of great importance, pre-service teachers' needs play a crucial role in their development. When the questionnaires are examined in detail, it is seen that the students have difficulty in writing clear thesis statements, and getting their message across in a comprehensible way. Besides that, the answers to the items in the questionnaire make it easy to observe that the means of participants' perceptions of the importance of academic writing sub-skills are relatively high, which also indicates how crucial they think academic writing is. These results were similar to the study of Asaoka and Isui (2003) that put the problems which the college students face in terms of academic writing into three categories; internal, external, and surface-level. According to the gathered results, it has been addressed that macro-level problems like planning, organization, and conclusion stand as a major difficulty in academic writing, which complies with the current study.

Furthermore, motivation holds a vital part in any part of learning. For this reason, in the questionnaire, pre-service teachers were asked about the motivation sources in terms of academic writing. They addressed that academic performance and personal pleasure are the two main reasons behind their writing motivation. Pre-service teachers also underlined that they mostly have difficulty with organization, generating ideas, and proper language use.

This view is supported by Shi and Fujioka's study (1998) concerning College of Liberal Arts professors' perception of students' writing at this university, which revealed that non-language teachers found organization was the most problematic area of their students writing. However contradictorily, in the same questionnaire, the participants also expressed that they feel most confident in supporting ideas, organization and proper language use which indicates that pre-service teachers are confident in those sub-skills yet they perceive those skills as challenging to perform. Similarly, in terms of the academic writing courses, pre-service teachers indicated that they mostly benefit from the instructions that are beneficial to the same sub-skills that they conceive as difficult.

According to pre-service teachers, to be able to improve those writing skills, the best way is to guided writing, peer review, and feedback. They also stated that instructors could contribute to the process by providing writing techniques and feedback which can be oral and written.

In addition, perceptions of the instructor holds a crucial part in academic courses as they are the ones that arrange the content of the writing courses and have a deeper relationship with the students. To achieve that, five questions were asked to the instructors with several different aims. One of these aims was to explore instructors' perception of the motivation level of the pre-service teachers in terms of academic writing skills. This section was the most discrepant part between the instructors. Each one of them provided a different answer in terms of proficiency level. According to one of the instructors, the motivation level of pre-service teachers depends on the student himself/herself while one of the teachers expressed that almost all of the students lack motivation in writing classes. However, it is crucial to indicate that not all of the instructors provided writing classes, which explains that this observation of instructors depends on different courses which could create diversity in students' motivation level.

Moreover, another objective of this study was to discover the instructors' perception of the importance and aim of academic writing courses. This perception of the instructors complies with students' perception as both groups indicated that academic writing is a crucial part of academic performance and needed to be improved. When it comes to deficiencies in academic writing, student's self-images also comply with the instructors' perceptions. The instructors indicated that students lack in generating ideas, organization, and proper language use. This shows that both the pre-service teachers and instructors have a common ground in terms of weaknesses in academic writing needed some support and improvement. This finding complied with Huang's study (2010) that investigates instructors' and students' perception of college students' necessity for improving their academic skills.

To be able to identify the sufficiency of the current writing courses and modifications that can be in writing courses, the instructors were asked about perceptions to answer the needs of the students. Several suggestions were provided by instructors, although some indicated that they do not provide writing classes. These suggestions indicated that students are required to have a deeper understanding of writing tasks in general.

Conclusion

The present study investigated the academic writing needs of pre-service teachers at the English Language Teaching (ELT) department. The study was conducted with the student participants from the first, second, and third years of ELT department, and their instructors.

The results shed light on the necessary modifications for the academic writing course provided at the department for pre-service teachers. The findings of this study revealed that academic writing skills are significant for pre-service teachers' future intentions and they stated



that they had difficulty in the organization, generating ideas, and proper language use while writing academically which was also underline by the instructors. The questionnaires including open-ended questions for both pre-service teachers and instructors showed that both groups agreed on pre-service teachers' weaknesses in academic writing needed some support and improvement. Therefore, the needs of the pre-service teachers are more likely to be met with the improvements of the course content, materials, and syllabus. In order to gain a better insight of the needs of pre-service teachers in terms of academic skills, not only writing skill, their needs for each year at the department can be explored, and the different skills needed to be gained for each level can be determined in detail.



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Appendices

Appendix A: Survey

Background Information

Age:

Gender:

In which year are you at your department?:

Perception Scale

		Not important at all	Slightly important	Important	Fairly important	Very important
1.	How important do you think academic writing skills are to your current graduate studies?	1	2	3	4	5
2.	How important do you think academic writing is to your future career in the long run?	1	2	3	4	5

Needs Analysis of Academic Writing Scale

	Strongly Agree (5)	Agree Agree (4)	Some Somewhat Agree (3)	Disagr Disagree (2)	Stro Strongly Disagree (1)
I need I need academic writing skills to use proper academic language					
I need I need academic writing skills to be able to choose and use appropriate vocabulary					
I need I need academic writing skills to understand the specific language features of the academic genre					
I need I need academic writing skills to write clear introductions					
I need academic writing skills to write clear thesis statements that correspond to the intended message to be delivered					
I need academic writing skills to put forward a clear and understandable claim					
I need academic writing skills to form a reasonable flow of ideas and events in the text s/he writes					
I need academic writing skills to be able to make connections among them					
I need academic writing skills to write a conclusion paragraph supporting the paper in general					

I need I need academic writing skills to write coherent and consistent explanations					
I need academic writing skills to reflect how similar topics and themes are dealt with in different writings					
I need academic writing skills to generate ideas to write by using different sources					
I need I need academic writing skills to avoid plagiarism while using different sources					

Appendix B: Open Ended Questions for Pre-Service Teachers

1. What is your motivation to learn academic writing skills?
2. What do you feel is the biggest problem you face in your writing?
3. In what areas of academic writing, if any, do you feel most confident? (using a proper language, writing clear introductions, supporting your idea with evidence, etc.)
4. What have you learned about writing that has helped you the most?
5. What do you think the aim of the academic writing course should be?
6. How can your lecturers help you to become a better writer?
7. What kind of activities do you think can help you most with your writing skills? (guided writing, peer review feedback, citation activities, etc.)
8. What do you think about the written feedback? Is it useful? Why/ why not?

Appendix C: Open Ended Questions for Instructors

1. What do you think the main purpose of an academic writing course at ELT undergraduate program should be?
2. How motivated do you think the ELT pre-service teachers are in the academic writing course? Why/Why not?
3. What skills or/and strategies do you think/believe the students are strong or weak in the writing course? Why/Why not?
4. Do you think the course meets the needs of the pre-service teachers? Why/Why not?
5. If you were going to offer this course, what modifications would you make? (e.g. syllabus design, assignments, etc.) Why/Why not?