

Middle School Students' Audience Awareness in Persuasive Texts

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Abstract- One of the important elements of writing is considering target audience, which requires writers to have audience awareness. Audience awareness is particularly crucial in persuasive writing because persuasive narratives require considering opposing ideas target audience have and refuting them without dialogic feedback. Considering the importance of audience awareness in persuasive narratives, this study investigated audience awareness of 7th grade students in two classrooms. A total of 30 students participated in the study, and each student completed two narratives during the two-week period of the study. Students were assigned different audiences for each narrative topic. Results were compared for mean differences, and Mann-Whitney U test was completed to examine the statistical significance of mean differences. Results indicated a statistically significant difference in audience awareness. Further analysis also indicated the importance of a meaningful match between the narrative topics and the assigned audience conditions. The study concludes with implications for teachers and suggestions for future studies.

Keywords: Audience awareness, persuasive narratives, middle school.

Özet- Ortaokul Öğrencilerinin İkna Yazılarındaki Okuyucu Bilinci. Hedef okuyucuyu göz önünde bulundurmamak, önemli yazma becerilerden biridir, ki bu beceri yazarlarda okuyucu bilincinin olmasını gerektirir. Okuyucu bilinci özellikle ikna edici yazılarda önemlidir çünkü ikna türü yazılar hedef okuyucunun zıt fikirlerinin diyolojik geribildirimini olmadan göz önünde bulundurulmasını gerektirir. Okuyucu bilincinin ikna türü yazılardaki önemini göz önüne alarak, bu çalışma iki sınıftaki 7. sınıf öğrencilerinin okuyucu farkındalıklarını araştırdı. Toplam 30 öğrenci çalışmaya katıldı ve her öğrenci çalışmanın iki haftalık döneminde ikna türünde iki kısa makale yazdı. Öğrencilere her konu için farklı hedef okuyucular atandı. Sonuçlar ortalama puanlardaki farklar için karşılaştırıldı ve ortalama farkların istatistiksel önemini test etmek için Mann-Whitney U testi uygulandı. Sonuçlar okuyucu farkındalığı alanında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark göstermiştir. Ayrıntılı analiz ayrıca makale konuları ve atanan okuyucu koşulları arasında anlamlı bir uyumun önemini gösterdi. Bu çalışma öğretmenler için uygulamalar ve gelecek çalışmalar için öneriler ile son buldu.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Okuyucu bilinci, ikna yazıları, ortaokul.

Introduction

Definition of audience awareness is complex and problematic (Kroll, 1984; Oliver, 1995), but its importance in writing is well established (Cohen & Riel, 1989; Elbow, 1981, Black, 1989; Flower & Hayes, 1980). According to Kroll (1981), having audience awareness means that writers understand writing and speaking are different realities and this difference has to be reflected in the texts they produce. Audience awareness involves understanding or trying to understand the “experiences, expectations and beliefs” of the addressed audience (Ede & Lunsford, 1984, p. 165). Although the writer may not know who will read the text, he or she uses the language of the text to cue readers to the role the writer envisions for them (Ede & Lunsford, 1984).

Paying attention to audience, adapting texts to target audience, and giving them cues about their roles can distinguish expert writers from novices (Carvalho, 2002; Bakhtin, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). Flower (1979) states that novice writers tend to compose *writer-based* prose and reflect the flow of their thought in their writing. On the other hand, expert writers tend to produce *reader-based* prose and reflect the purpose of their thought and adapt them to the audience. Gregg et al. (1996) suggest a correlation between writing difficulties and lack of audience awareness and Karchmer-Klein (2007) states that when writers acknowledge and understand their readers, they are better able to construct effective texts.

These intricate skills involved in considering audience usually develop at school. Therefore, schools have an important role in teaching audience and its role in writing (Carvalho, 2002). However, research suggests that schools provide students with limited experience in writing for different audiences because teachers are the main and only audience in most writing assignments (Applebee, 1981; Berkenkotter, 1981). While writing for their teachers, students cannot have enough opportunities to differentiate their writing for various audiences. In addition, compared to students, teachers are more knowledgeable on issues students write about (Applebee, 1981) and both teachers and students share the same context. Therefore, students may not feel the necessity to expand their thoughts in detail when writing for their teachers.

Besides the crucial role schools have in teaching the importance of audience awareness in writing, schools are also important for teaching how to write in genres (Bos, Krajcik & Soloway, 1997). Studies

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indicate that students have difficulty especially with persuasive writing (Applebee, Langer, Jenkins, Mullis, & Foertsch, 1990; Greenwald, Persky, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999; Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2003). It is reported that 65-88% of students from fourth to twelfth grade generate poor to mediocre responses to persuasive writing tasks (Applebee et al., 1990). Persuasive writing is particularly demanding because it requires dialogue and questioning with the target audience to establish arguments, as well as refute opposing positions, without dialogic feedback (Midgette, Haria, & MacArthur, 2008). Therefore, writers need to present their position clearly, deliver arguments coherently, support their claims with relevant justification and elaborations, consider counterarguments that might be raised by the audience, and find ways to refute these counterarguments (Rieke & Sillars, 2001). In addition, writers have to maintain an appropriate tone that is considerate of the potential audience to reduce resistance (Midgette et al., 2008). Persuasive essays should also address the audience directly to engage the reader fully in the argument (Coirier, Andriessen, & Chanquoy, 1999; Piolat, Roussey, & Gombert, 1999).

Due to the importance of audience awareness in writing and its crucial role in persuasive genre, it would be informative to investigate school age students' audience awareness with a specific focus on persuasive texts. However, studies investigating the topic are very limited. Research study conducted by Midgette, Haria, and McArthur in 2008 is currently the only peer-reviewed study on audience awareness and persuasive or argumentative texts. The study and its findings will be discussed in detail.

Audience Awareness in Persuasive Texts

In their study, Midgette, Haria, and MacArthur (2008) investigated the effects of various revising goals focusing on the persuasive writing of one hundred eighty-one fifth- and eighth-grade students in an urban/suburban school district. 29% of the 5th graders and 39% of the 8th graders came from low Socio Economic Status (SES) families as indicated by eligibility for free or reduced price lunch. Students with disabilities and English language learners were excluded from the study.

They randomly assigned students to three goal conditions. In the first group, students were assigned a general goal, which was to improve a text. Students in the second group were set a goal to improve content of a text. Finally, the third group was assigned a goal to improve content and communication with an audience. The final versions of student texts were evaluated for their overall persuasiveness and for elements of persuasive discourse relevant to content and audience.

Researchers had 6 main hypotheses. They first anticipated that students in the second and third groups would have improved persuasive essays, with the third group showing the most improvement. Results indicated that while setting specific goals improved the quality of the second and third groups' essays as expected, there was no significant difference in quality of texts between the two groups. Although the third group, who focused on improving content and audience, considered and rebutted opposing perspectives more often than the other groups, the quality of its essays was not higher than the quality of second group's essays. Authors explained the potential reason for the non-significant results in the quality of essays between second and third group as the essays' low quality even when the students were provided specific goals. The average score of the second and third groups' essays were 3.5 out of seven.

Researchers also anticipated an increase in the quantity and quality of reasons and elaborations of reasons for the second and third groups. However, no statistically significant differences were found to confirm their hypothesis. The third hypothesis was about observing an increase in the consideration of opposing reasons and rebuttals in the third group that focused on improving not only content but also the audience. Results confirmed the hypothesis as students in the third group considered and rebutted opposing views more than the other two groups did. Another hypothesis was that the tone of writing, including use of respectful, formal language and markers of politeness, would change based on the different audience goals. This hypothesis was not confirmed. Researchers explained that the potential explanation might be that although students in the third group were prompted to consider audience, they were not specifically told about the characteristics of the target audience.

Researchers' fifth hypothesis was that eight-grade students in the third group would perform better compared to fifth-grade students in the same group. Results confirmed their hypothesis, showing that older students responded to the content plus audience awareness goals more successfully than younger students because they were able to consider and rebut opposing reasons more often than the younger group. This result confirms earlier studies suggesting that considering opposing position and internalizing argumentative schema

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is related to students' developmental progress (Brassart, 1992; Golder & Coirier, 1994; Piolat, et al., 1999; Roussey & Gombert, 1996).

The sixth, and final hypothesis was about gender differences. They did not anticipate an interaction between gender and goal condition. However, similar to existing findings, results indicated a difference between genres, in which girls wrote more persuasively than boys (Persky et al., 2003; Willingham, Cole, Lewis, & Leung, 1997). Similarly, girls scored higher on the persuasive elements, including reasons, elaborations, coherence, tone, and direct engagement, as previous studies illustrated (Maki, Voeten, Vauras, & Poskiparta, 2001; Kanaris, 1999).

The study by Midgette et al. (2008) is informative in terms of being a leading study investigating audience awareness with persuasive texts. Especially the results, which revealed that the student group focusing on improving not only content but also audience considered opposing positions and rebutted them more often than other students was informative. The findings were also important as they showed that giving students specific goals about improving content and audience helped them write essays that were more persuasive. Finally, the study indicated that since considering and rebutting opposing views is a developmental skill, future studies should consider investigating the issue with student groups who has reached the necessary developmental level.

Despite the informative findings Midgette et. al. (2008) presented in their study, there is still need for research investigating audience awareness. Since persuasive texts require consideration of audience and their opposing views more than other genres, investigating audience awareness through persuasive texts might provide more insightful data. Additionally, most studies on audience awareness and persuasive texts are conducted at the college level due to the developmental skills required to think about arguments and rebuttal of opposing views. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the topic with school-age students who have reached the required developmental level, such as middle- and high-school students. Considering the important role audience awareness has in writing, more specifically in persuasive genre, and the need to investigate the topic with school-age students, this study examined audience awareness of 7th graders in an urban middle school. The general question investigated whether 7th graders were aware of the differences between distant- and peer-audience in persuasive genre. A more specific question was about how audience awareness was displayed in students' persuasive essays when they wrote for different audience conditions.

Method

In this study participants were requested to write two narratives, one in a teacher-audience condition and the other in a peer-audience condition. Participants were given the same prompts, instructions, and time to write their essays.

Setting and Context

The study was conducted in two 7th grade classrooms in a mid-sized urban middle school in the U.S. The school served sixth, seventh, and eighth grades with a total of 570 students. The school's demographic profile was composed of mostly African American (38.6%) and Hispanic students (39.5%). 86.2% of student population was from low-income families as indicated by eligibility for free and reduced lunch. 26.6% of student population was English Language Learners and 25% of students were in special education. The school has not been able to meet the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in English Language Arts since 2005.

A classroom teacher volunteered to participate in the study with her two seventh-grade classrooms. The teacher had been implementing a literacy program that was developed by literacy researchers at a local university focusing on improving vocabulary and reading comprehension. The program was segmented into weeks and each week included a short reading passage about a topic written in different genres. Key vocabulary words preceded the passage and comprehension questions as well as discussion questions followed the text. The final activity following the reading passage was answering an open-response question that required students to write an essay in the same genre with the reading text.

Before starting the study, a meeting was arranged with the classroom teacher to identify the week they were studying in the program and the two weeks that would be appropriate to start the study. The teacher stated that they were working on the content of Week 8 at the time of the meeting and suggested conducting the study on Week 10 and Week 11 as the genre of these two weeks were persuasion. The teacher informed

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that completing the content of each week took about one week and the writing section of the week was completed on Fridays. Therefore, students completed the two writing tasks one week apart on Fridays.

Subjects

A seventh-grade classroom teacher wanted to participate in the study with her two seventh-grade classrooms. Although there was a total of 45 students in both classrooms, 13 students did not complete the assigned tasks because they were absent. Additionally, two students returned essays that were too short to analyze and, hence, were excluded from the study. A total of 30 students, with 15 students from each classroom, participated in the study.

Writing Prompts and Audience Conditions

When students were ready to respond to the open-response section of Week 10 in the literacy program, they were read the week's writing prompt (Should people be vegetarian?), which was written on students' books. After reading the prompt, Classroom A was informed that after completing their essays, they would be copied to distribute to their peers in the other 7th grade classroom. Therefore, their audience was their peers in the 7th grade classroom. Before students began to write, student questions were answered. Classroom B, who had the same writing prompt with Classroom A, was informed that after completing their essays, the researcher would copy their essays to read. Therefore, their audience was the researcher. Before students started writing, the researcher answered student questions and after the questions are answered students began to write their essays.

The next week, in Week 11, students were read the week's writing prompt, "Should the school day be extended?" Different from the previous week, the audience conditions assigned to each classroom was changed. After reading the writing prompt, Classroom A was informed that the researcher would copy their essays to read. Therefore, their audience would be the researcher. On the other hand, Classroom B was informed that after completing their essays, the essays would be copied to distribute to their peers in the other 7th classroom. Therefore, their audience will be their peers in the 7th grade classroom. Student questions were answered before students started writing.

Students were given 35 minutes to complete their essays and were requested to work silently. They were given 10- and 5-minute warnings before the allotted time ended. There were two adults in the classroom at the time of the writing periods answering student questions and ensuring an environment conducive to good writing. After students completed their compositions, the originals of student essays were collected, copied at the school for analysis purposes, and were returned to the students on the same day. A total of 60 essays were collected from both classrooms at the end of Weeks 10 and 11.

Table 1. Writing Prompts and Audience Conditions

	Classroom A	Classroom B
Week 10 "Should people be vegetarians?"	Target Audience: Peers	Target Audience: Researcher
Week 11 "Should the school day be extended?"	Target Audience: Researcher	Target Audience: Peers

Coding Student Work

After copying student narratives, each essay was assigned a random ID number and was typed into word document staying loyal to the original versions. None of the grammar or spelling mistakes was changed. The rubric used in this study (see Appendix A) was adapted from Midgette, Haria, and MacArthur (2008). Each student narrative was attached to a scoring rubric with the same ID number to be evaluated by the research team for content, audience awareness, and word choice.

Content

The content component of the rubric evaluated position, reasons, and coherence. Position referred to stating the supported idea explicitly in a well-developed manner. Reasons were scored based on providing clear, relevant,

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and significant ideas or examples supporting the position students took. Coherence referred to organization and smooth connections among parts of the essay. Interrater reliability on the scored student essays was high (Pearson's $r = 0.95$, $p = .001$).

Audience Awareness

Audience awareness section of the rubric included opposing reasons, rebuttals, and direct engagement with the audience. Opposing reasons rated whether students discussed opposite positions and whether these discussions were relevant, significant, and clearly expressed. Rebuttals examined whether students were able to explicitly weaken the opposite views by using relevant information or arguments without contradicting their original position. Finally, tone referred to the use of language adapted to the audience by use of appropriate seriousness and markers of politeness. Interrater reliability on the scored student essays was high (Pearson's $r = 0.92$, $p = .001$).

Word Choice

Word choices students made were rated based on their variety and effective use to express ideas. Interrater reliability on the scored student essays was high (Pearson's $r = 0.93$, $p = .001$). Additionally, word count was computed for each student narrative. A guideline was created while counting slang words, intentionally misspelled words, and repeated misspellings of a word.

Writing Quality

The quality of student narratives was determined based on the total score of the rubric's subsections. For instance, a narrative's quality of content was determined by the total scores of its subsections; position, reasons, and coherence. The quality of audience awareness was calculated by adding the scores given to its subsections, which were reasons, rebuttals, and tone with the audience. Finally, the overall quality of the essay was scored based on the sum of content, audience awareness, and word choice. Interrater reliability on the scored student essays regarding their overall quality was high (Pearson's $r = 0.97$, $p = 0.01$).

Data Analysis

Student narratives were analyzed to identify differences in the two audience conditions. Means of sections in the rubric- content, audience awareness, and word choice- were calculated and tabled as the data was small. Nonparametric Mann-Whitney U test was used to examine statistical significance of mean differences at a threshold $p < 0.05$. Initial comparison of means indicated a statistically significant change in means in audience awareness part of the rubric. When significant differences were identified, further analysis of means was conducted for the subsections of audience awareness to identify the section with higher mean differences.

Results

Results will be presented separately for content, audience awareness, word choice, and overall quality of student narratives. In each section, total scores as well as means for each audience condition and narrative topic will be discussed and will be presented as a table. Results indicated that content scores and means were different for the two audience conditions and narrative topics. However, variance in scores and means for audience awareness was higher than the variance in content section of the rubric. Mann-Whitney U test revealed the mean difference in audience awareness to be significant.

More detailed comparison of means was made in order to identify the specific skill within audience awareness that lead to higher difference in means. Comparison of means indicated that the largest mean difference among opposing reasons, rebuttals, and tone was in opposing reasons subsection of audience awareness. Analysis of word choice scores and means revealed that the score and mean differences were not as large as in the content and audience awareness sections of the evaluation rubric. Finally, when student narratives were evaluated for their overall quality, results showed a difference between the two classrooms, with Classroom B writing higher quality persuasive narratives than Classroom A.

Content

The highest score a classroom could get for each of the two audience conditions from the content section of the rubric was 105 points. The highest score was calculated by multiplying the number of participants in each

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classroom (15) with the highest possible score one student could get from the content section of the rubric (7). Scores that were lower than 50% of highest attainable score were considered as low quality. Scores between 50% and 70% of highest score were perceived as moderate, while scores higher than 70% were deemed as good quality. Since the highest attainable score was 105 points, scores higher than 73.5 were considered as good quality. Finally, scores higher than 90% were considered as high quality.

Classroom A's and B's scores and means were first analyzed for differences in audience conditions and second for narrative topics. Regarding analysis of scores in audience conditions, Classroom A's score for both audience conditions was 74 points with the means of 4.93. Classroom B's score for the researcher as the audience condition was 78 points ($\bar{x} = 5.2$), while its score for the peer audience condition was 84 points ($\bar{x} = 5.6$). The content of both classrooms' narratives were deemed as good quality as they were slightly above 73.5 points in both audience conditions. However, it was observed that Classroom B's scores were higher than Classroom A.

Table 2. Content Scores and Means

	Narrative Topic	Content	
		Highest score per audience condition= 105	
Classroom A N=15	Should the school day be extended?	Audience: Researcher Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	74 4.93
	Should people be vegetarian?	Audience: Peer Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	74 4.93
Classroom B N=15	Should people be vegetarian?	Audience: Researcher Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	78 5.2
	Should the school day be extended?	Audience: Peer Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	84 5.6

After calculating the scores and means of both classrooms' narratives for content, scores and means of both classrooms' narratives written on different topics, but for the same target audience, were compared to examine differences in the content as a result of different audience conditions. The largest difference of means between the two classrooms was when they both wrote for the researcher and the mean difference between classrooms was 0.67. In order to identify whether this mean difference in content was statistically significant, Mann-Whitney U test was utilized at the significance level of .05. Mann-Whitney U test results were reported in a table format as suggested by Turgut (2011).

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U Test Results for 'Researcher as Target Audience'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P
Classroom A	15	14.63	219.50	99.5	0.580
Classroom B	15	16.37	245.50		
Total	30				

Results of Mann-Whitney U test indicated that the mean rank for Classroom A was 14.63, which was 16.37 for Classroom B. The sum of ranks was 219.5 for Classroom A, which was 245.5 for Classroom B. The U test result was 99.5 and the significance was 0.58. Shortly, although there was a 1.74 mean rank difference between the two classrooms when they both wrote for the researcher, the difference was not statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

Besides the first analysis on audience conditions, a second analysis was performed on narrative topics. As reported earlier in Table 2, it was observed that when Classroom B wrote to their peer about extending the school day, their score was higher than the score Classroom A attained on the same topic, which they wrote for the researcher. This difference in means when two classrooms wrote on the same topic for different audience needs to be highlighted. When Classroom A wrote on the topic of extending the school day for the researcher, the mean was 4.93. However, when Classroom B wrote on the same topic for their peers, the mean was higher ($\bar{x}=5.6$). Similarly, when Classroom A wrote about being vegetarian for their peer, the mean was 4.93, but when Classroom B wrote on the topic for the researcher, the mean was 5.2. This difference between the two classrooms in narrative topics and assigned audience conditions may indicate the necessity of a meaningful match between narrative topics and target audience for the quality of content in student narratives.

Audience Awareness

Data related to audience awareness was initially analyzed for scores and means and for differences in means. Based on the variance between means, differences between classrooms in regard to target audience and narrative topic were examined. The highest score a classroom could get from audience awareness section of the rubric was 90 points, which was calculated by multiplying the number of participants in each classroom (N=15) with the highest possible score one student could get from the section (6 points). 50% and 70% of highest attainable score (90) were calculated respectively as 45 points and 63 points.

Table 4. Audience Awareness Scores and Means

	Writing Topic	Audience Awareness Highest score per audience condition= 90	
Classroom A N=15	Should the school day be extended?	Audience: Researcher Total score: 51 Mean (\bar{x}): 3.4	
	Should people be vegetarian?	Audience: Peer Total score: 45 Mean (\bar{x}): 3	
Classroom B N=15	Should people be vegetarian?	Audience: Researcher Total score: 48 Mean (\bar{x}): 3.2	
	Should the school day be extended?	Audience: Peer Total score: 65 Mean (\bar{x}): 4.33	

When students in Classroom A wrote to the researcher about extending the school days, their score was 51 points ($\bar{x}=3.4$), which was considered as moderate quality. When they wrote to their peer about being vegetarian, their score was 45 points ($\bar{x}=3$), which was the cut point between low and moderate quality. Classroom B's score in writing about becoming vegetarian for the researcher was at moderate quality with 48 points ($\bar{x}=3.2$). On the other hand, when Classroom B discussed whether school days should be extended with their peers, their narratives were at good quality with 65 points ($\bar{x}=4.33$).

Table 5. Mann-Whitney U Test Results for 'Peer as Target Audience'

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P
Classroom A	15	12.13	182.00	62.00	0.032
Classroom B	15	18.87	283.00		
Total	30				

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Further analysis was completed by comparing the two classrooms' means for the same audience conditions. Since the largest mean difference between the two classrooms was in the peer audience condition with a mean difference of 1.33, statistical significance of the difference was tested through Mann-Whitney U test ($p < 0.05$). The test results for the peer as target audience showed a mean rank difference of 6.74 between Classroom A (12.13) and Classroom B (18.87) (see Table 5). Sum of ranks for Classroom A was 182, which was 283 for Classroom B. The test result was 62 and significance was 0.032. In other words, the difference between the two classrooms in the peer condition was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$).

In order to identify the specific audience awareness subcategory that had the largest mean difference in the peer audience condition, means of opposing reasons, rebuttal, and tone were calculated and reported in Table 6.

Table 6. Mean differences of Audience Awareness Subcategories for Classrooms A and B in Peer Condition

	Writing Topic	Audience Condition	Opposing Reasons	Rebuttals	Tone
Classroom A N=15	Should people be vegetarian?	Peer	Mean (\bar{x}): 1.33	Mean (\bar{x}): 0.8	Mean (\bar{x}): 0.86
Classroom B N=15	Should the school day be extended?	Peer	Mean (\bar{x}): 1.93	Mean (\bar{x}): 1.33	Mean (\bar{x}): 1.06
Mean Difference			$\bar{x}_B - \bar{x}_A = 0.6$	$\bar{x}_B - \bar{x}_A = 0.53$	$\bar{x}_B - \bar{x}_A = 0.2$

When students in Classroom A wrote for their peers about being vegetarians, the mean for opposing reasons was 1.33, rebuttals was 0.8, and tone was 0.86. In Classroom B, on the week when students wrote for their peers about extending the school day their mean for opposing reasons was 1.93, rebuttals was 1.33, and tone was 1.06. The mean difference between classrooms in opposing reasons for the peer condition was 0.6. The mean differences for rebuttals and tone were respectively 0.53 and 0.2. These results indicate that although there direct engagement did not change much, there was a larger difference in Classroom B's scores for rebuttals, but especially opposing reasons.

Finally, besides analyzing data simply in relation to audience conditions, data was also analyzed for the narrative topic and audience condition. Similar to the findings reported earlier related to content, analysis of same narrative topics for different audience condition revealed that Classroom B had a higher score (65) and mean (4.33) than Classroom A (51 points and $\bar{x} = 3.4$) when they both discussed extending the school days but for different audiences. Classroom A discussed the topic for the researcher and Classroom B for their peers. Although the scores and means of two classrooms were also different when they wrote about becoming a vegetarian in different audience conditions, the difference was not as large as the week when they discussed extending school days.

Word Choice

The highest score a classroom could get from word choice was 45. The highest score was calculated by multiplying the number of participants in each classroom (15) with the highest possible score one student could get from the word choice section (3). 50% and 70% of highest attainable score were calculated as 22.5 and 31.5 points. Classroom A's score in writing about extending the school days for the researcher was 15 points ($\bar{x} = 1$). When Classroom A wrote to their peers about being vegetarian, the score was 17 points ($\bar{x} = 1.13$). Classroom B's score, when they discussed whether people should be vegetarian with the researcher, was 20 points ($\bar{x} = 1.33$). On the other hand, Classroom B's score in discussing whether school days should be extended with their peer was 17 ($\bar{x} = 1.13$). All scores in word choice indicated that students' narratives fell into low quality category and mean differences were not large.

Table 7. *Word Choice Scores and Means*

	Writing Topic	Word Choice	
		Highest score per audience condition= 45	
Classroom A N=15	Should the school day be extended?	Audience: Researcher Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	15 1
	Should people be vegetarian?	Audience: Peer Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	17 1.13
Classroom B N=15	Should people be vegetarian?	Audience: Researcher Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	20 1.33
	Should the school day be extended?	Audience: Peer Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	17 1.13

Overall Quality

In order to identify overall quality of student narratives, the previously discussed scores and means for content, audience awareness, and word choice were summed. The highest score a classroom could get for overall quality was 240 points. Classrooms that attained a score lower than 50% of the total score were regarded as low quality. Classrooms with narratives receiving scores higher than 50% of the total score, which was calculated to be 120 points, were considered as moderate quality. 70% of total score were calculated to be 168 points and narratives at 168 or higher points were categorized as good quality. Finally, narratives that attained 90% or higher percentage from the total score qualified to be a high quality narrative.

As Table 8 illustrates below, when students in Classroom A wrote to the researcher about extending the school days, their total score was 140 points ($\bar{x}=9.33$), which was considered as moderate quality. When they wrote to their peer about being vegetarian, their total score was 136 points ($\bar{x}=9.06$), which was again written at moderate quality. Classroom B's score in writing to the researcher about becoming vegetarian was at moderate quality with 146 points ($\bar{x}=9.73$). Finally, when Classroom B discussed whether school days should be extended with their peers, their narratives were also at moderate quality with 166 points ($\bar{x}=11.06$), but it lacked only 2 points to be considered as good quality narrative.

Table 8. *Overall Narrative Quality Scores and Means*

	Writing Topic	Overall Narrative Quality	
		Highest score per audience condition= 240	
Classroom A N=15	Should the school day be extended?	Audience: Researcher Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	140 9.33
	Should people be vegetarian?	Audience: Peer Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	136 9.06
Classroom B N=15	Should people be vegetarian?	Audience: Researcher Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	146 9.73
	Should the school day be extended?	Audience: Peer Total score: Mean (\bar{x}):	166 11.06

The available data for overall quality of narratives presented above were further analyzed for similar audience conditions as well as narrative topics. First the two classrooms' total scores were compared for same audience conditions. When students in Classroom A wrote to the researcher, the mean was 9.33. When Classroom B wrote to the same audience, their score was slightly higher than Classroom A ($\bar{x} = 9.73$). When two classrooms' means for the peer condition is compared, it is observed that Classroom A had a mean of 9.06 and Classroom B had 11.06, 2 mean points higher than Classroom A.

Finally, total means classrooms attained were compared for differences in narrative topics. Similar to the findings reported earlier related to content and audience awareness sections, analysis of same narrative topics revealed that Classroom B had a higher score (166) and mean (11.06) than Classroom A (140 points and $\bar{x} = 9.33$) when they both discussed extending the school days but for different audiences. Classroom A discussed the topic for the researcher and Classroom B for their peers. Although the scores and means of two classrooms were also different when they wrote about becoming a vegetarian in different audience conditions, the difference was not as large as the week when they discussed extending school days.

Discussion

In the results section findings were presented separately for content, audience awareness, word choice, and over quality of narratives. Interpretations of findings for content, audience awareness, and word choice need to be made cautiously because results related to the overall quality of student narratives indicated that both classrooms' narratives were at moderate quality. Among content, audience awareness, and word choice, word choice had not only the lowest means but also the smallest mean difference between classrooms, audience conditions, and narrative topics indicating that students in both classrooms had very similar range of vocabulary words used in their narratives. Results regarding content showed that there was some difference in means between Classrooms A and B, but the difference was not statistically significant.

Results related to audience awareness highlighted a statistically significant difference between audience conditions. Students writing to their peers had significantly higher means than students that wrote for the researcher. Further analysis indicated that highest mean differences in audience awareness were in opposing reasons followed by rebuttals. This finding on increased means of opposing reasons and rebuttals was also reported by Midgette et al. (2008), who found that students focusing on improving their narratives in regards to audience considered and rebutted opposing views more than other students. However, similar to what Midgette et al. (2008) reported, despite the increased consideration of opposing reasons and rebuttals the quality of student essays did not necessarily improve, but the narratives were closer to the cut point for good quality.

Related to findings about audience awareness, another subcategory of audience awareness along with opposing reasons and rebuttals was tone of writing. Similar to results Midgette et al. (2008) found in their study, there was not much difference in means for tone of writing. While Midgette et al. (2008) explained that they did not prompt students to consider a specific audience in their study, students in this current study were assigned specific audience conditions. Despite this specific audience assignment, means for tone were still not very different. A potential explanation for the similar means in tone could be the similar word choice means students had. It was mentioned earlier at the beginning of discussion section that students' word choice means were similar, indicating that they had similar words used in their narratives. This limitation in the words might have prevented students from addressing their target audience with different tones.

Overall interpretation of results suggests the importance of assigning proper audience condition to narrative topics. Results indicated that when students wrote to their peers about extending school days and wrote to the researcher about becoming vegetarian, means were generally higher. This finding about assigning proper target audience to narrative topics might also explain the higher means Classroom B received in content compared to Classroom A, which was mentioned earlier. When the match between target audience and narrative topics are considered, it is observed that the match made for Classroom B is more meaningful than Classroom A. In Classroom B, students were requested to write about whether the school day should be extended and their target audience was their peers. However, Classroom A was requested to write an essay on the same topic for the researcher. In other words, data suggested that while writing about extending the school day is relevant for all students, writing it specifically for peers was a more meaningful task for Classroom B, compared to writing it for the researcher as Classroom A did. Similarly, discussing whether people should

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become vegetarian was more meaningful to discuss with the researcher for Classroom B than with their peers due to the lesser relevance of the topic to students' experiences and lives.

Another finding this study could offer to the writing field is about the phase of writing that writers should focus on audience. Some researchers suggest that writers can think about their audience the most during the revision phase of writing (Holliday & McCutchen, 2004; Midgette et al., 2008). On the other hand, other researchers suggest that accomplished writers could consider the needs of their audience while composing their narratives (Roth, 1987). Results of this study indicate that although the 7th graders in this study did not have a chance to revise their narratives and wrote moderate-quality essays, their means in audience awareness were statistically significant higher, when the assigned audience condition was relevant to the essay topic.

Implications

Results of this study have some implications for teachers and researchers. An implication for teachers is paying attention to the match between narrative topics students are requested to write about and target audience they are asked to address. Existing research suggests that students should be given more opportunities to write for different audiences, rather than repetitively writing to their teachers (Applebee, 1981; Berkenkotter, 1981). However, based on the results of this study, teachers need to be cautious about making a meaningful match between target audience and narrative topics.

Despite the contributions this study makes to the field, this study also has limitations that could inform future research. One of the limitations is about the lack of initial evaluation of two classrooms to test the similarities and differences between the two classrooms. Although the classroom teacher indicated at the beginning of the study that achievement scores of two classrooms are similar in standardized tests and teacher evaluations, not testing the differences between the classrooms may pose a limitation in terms of understanding the existing differences in the students' writing scores and achievements. Therefore, future studies need to ensure testing for differences between student groups or classrooms before the study begins. Another limitation of the study, which could inform studies in future, is about the number of participants. Since the number of participants decreased during the data collection phase due to absences, data analysis performed on available data was limited to comparison of means. Future studies could include more participants and increase the amount of data to conduct statistical tests.

Despite its limitations, this study is important to highlight the fact that there is limited research available examining audience awareness in persuasive narratives with middle- or high-school students. Additionally, the results of this study are important in highlighting the importance of a meaningful match between narrative topics and target audience students are requested to write.

Conclusion

This study investigated audience awareness of a total of 30 students in two 7th grade classrooms in the persuasive narratives they wrote. Each student was requested to write two narratives on different topics for different audiences. Student narratives were analyzed through a rubric for their content, audience awareness, word choice, and overall quality. Results indicated that overall quality of student narratives in both classrooms' were at moderate quality and had very similar range of vocabulary words. Results regarding audience awareness highlighted a statistically significant difference between audience conditions. Students writing to their peers had significantly higher means than students that wrote for the researcher when the topic was relevant to the target audience. Further analysis indicated that highest mean differences in audience awareness were in opposing reasons followed by rebuttals. Results were concluded by emphasizing the importance of creating a meaningful match between narrative topics students are requested to write about and target audience they need to address. Implications for teachers and future research were discussed along with limitations of the study.

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Genel Özet

Okuyucu bilincinin tanımı karışık ve problemlidir (Kroll, 1984; Oliver, 1995), fakat bu bilincin etkili yazıdaki önemi iyi araştırılmıştır ve ispatlanmıştır (Cohen & Riel, 1989; Elbow, 1981, Black, 1989; Flower & Hayes, 1980). Okuyucuya dikkat etmek, yazıyı okuyucuya adapte etmek ve okuyuculara rolleri hakkında ip uçları vermek usta yazarları usta olmayanlardan ayırır (Carvalho, 2002; Bakhtin, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978). Bu ince beceriler genellikle okulda gelişir. Bu yüzden okullar okuyucu ve okuyucuların yazıdaki rolünün öğretiminde önemli bir rol oynar (Carvalho, 2002). Fakat araştırmalar, okulların öğrencilere farklı okuyuculara yazmak için sınırlı imkanlar sağladığını önermektedir, çünkü birçok makale ödevlerinde öğretmenler hedef okuyucudur (Applebee, 1981; Berkenkotter, 1981). Okuyucu bilincinin yanında disiplin ve yazı türlerine özgü formların öğrenilmesi etkili yazma için önemlidir (Bos, Krajcik & Soloway, 1997). Araştırmalar öğrencilerin özellikle ikna türü yazılarda zorlandıklarını göstermektedir (Applebee, Langer, Jenkins, Mullis, & Foertsch, 1990; Greenwald, Persky, Campbell, & Mazzeo, 1999; Persky, Daane, & Jin, 2003). Okuyucu bilincinin yazıdaki, özellikle ikna türü yazılardaki, öneminden dolayı okul yaşındaki öğrencilerin okuyucu bilincini ikna türü yazılarda araştırmak bilgilendirici olacaktır.

Bu çalışmada katılımcılar iki farklı 7. sınıf öğrencileriydi ve her sınıftan 15 kişi olmak üzere çalışmaya toplam 30 öğrenci katıldı. Her katılımcıdan okul günlerinin uzatılması ve vejeteryan olmak konuları üzerine iki ikna türü yazı yazması istendi. Bir yazının hedef okuyucusu araştırmacının yazarı ve diğeri ise katılımcıların 7. sınıftaki diğer arkadaşları idi. Katılımcılara yazılarını yazmaları için aynı direktifler, bilgiler ve zaman verildi. A sınıfı ilk hafta vejeteryan olmak konusu hakkında bir yazıyı arkadaşları için yazdı. B sınıfından ise aynı konuyu araştırmacı için yazması istendi. İkinci hafta ise A sınıfı okul günlerinin uzatılması üzerine bir yazıyı araştırmacı için yazdı. B sınıfından ise aynı konuyu arkadaşları için yazması istendi. Veri toplama süreci iki hafta sürdü ve toplanan veri Midgette et. al. (2008) tarafından ikna türü yazılar ve okuyucu bilinci üzerine yapılan araştırmada geliştirilen değerlendirme formu ile analiz edildi. Öğrenciler yazıları içerik, okuyucu bilinci, kelime seçimi ve genel kalite olmak üzere dört bölüm üzerinden değerlendirildi. Dört bölüm üzerinde yapılan puanlamaların ortalamaları alındı ve her bölümün ortalaması okuyucu, yazı konusu ve sınıflar arası farklılıklar için karşılaştırıldı.

Genel kalite üzerine olan analizler, öğrenci makalelerinin orta kalitede olduğunu tespit etti. İçerik alanındaki sonuçlar B sınıfının ortalamalarında yükseliş tespit ederken, bu yükselişin istatistiksel olarak anlamlı olmadığı görüldü. Okuyucu bilinci üzerine olan analizler hedef okuyucu açısından istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark gösterdi. Arkadaşları için yazan öğrenciler, araştırmacı için yazan öğrencilerden daha yüksek ortalama puan aldılar. Okuyucu bilinci üzerine daha detaylı analizler karşıt fikirler ve bu fikirlerin çürütülmesi alanlarında ortalamaların arkadaş okuyucuları için yükseldiğini tespit etti. Kelime seçiminin analizleri ise iki sınıfın da kelime haznelerinin okuyucuya yada yazma konusuna göre farklılık göstermediğini tespit etti. Son olarak, elde edilen sonuçlar genel olarak değerlendirildiğinde makale konuları ile atan okuyucu koşulları arasında anlamlı bir uyumun önemli olduğunu gösterdi. Bu sonuçlara dayanarak öğretmenlerin öğrencilere yazma konusu verdiklerinde hedef okuyucunun konuya uygun atanması önerildi. Gelecek çalışmalar için öneriler arasında ise bu araştırmanın daha fazla katılımcı ile tekrarlanması yer aldı.

MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS' AUDIENCE AWARENESS IN PERSUASIVE TEXTS

Appendix A

	3	2	1	0	Score
1. Content					Total:
a. Position	Position explicitly or implicitly stated, responsive to the topic and well developed.	Position explicitly stated or implicit but clear; responsive to the topic, and not fully developed.	Vague or poorly developed position; may be only partially responsive to the topic; may give more than one point of view without choosing one.	No position stated or not responsive to the topic	
b. Reasons		Reason is clear, relevant, and significant	Reason is relevant but may lack clarity or be of minor significance	Reason is not relevant or contradictory to the position or not clear	
c. Coherence		<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening statement, body, and conclusion should adhere to the main position - Each paragraph deal with one overall idea <p>Smooth flow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Well-developed, organized and relevant arguments 	<p>Organization</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opening statement, body, and conclusion should adhere to the main position - May or may not have conclusion - May or may not have separate ideas into distinct paragraphs <p>Smooth flow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Somewhat like knowledge telling: choppy presentation of ideas and elaborations - The ideas and elaborations are somewhat logical but not well-sequenced 	<p>Organization and Smooth flow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vague introduction, body and conclusion or no conclusion - Pure knowledge telling - Ideas are not organized sequentially 	Score
2. Audience Awareness					Total:
a. Opposing Reasons & Rebuttal					
i. Opposing Reasons					
		The opposite view is relevant, opposite of the main argument/position, significant and clearly expressed	The opposite view is relevant, but may lack clarity, or be of minor significance or just acknowledges an alternative position	The alternative view is not relevant or not clear	
ii. Rebuttal					
		Explicitly and directly responsive to the opposite view is rebutted by relevant elaboration, strengthens and does not contradict the original position of the author.	The opposite view is implicitly/explicitly rebutted by relevant elaboration which may lack clarity	The elaboration supporting the rebuttal is irrelevant or contradicts the author's original position	
b. Tone					
		Degree of engagement of the audience in the argument development is high. The presentation of the argument is explicitly dialogical in nature. Emotionally appealing to the reader.	Degree of engagement of the audience in the argument development is less, but present. The author does not appeal to the reader effectively. The presentation shows the marks of the dialog, but it is not rhetorically developed.	There is no evidence of the effort to engage the audience. The author is writing to oneself or in a vacuum.	
3. Word Choice					
Total:					
	Word choices are varied & purposeful to express ideas	One basic words used in simple ways.	Uses only non academic vocabulary, but uses it well.	Uses two or more academic words to express ideas	