



## Analysis of Writing Dispositions of Sixth Grade Students

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### Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in terms of different variables. In this research structured in survey model, "Writing Disposition Scale" developed by Piazza and Siebert (2008) and adapted to Turkish by İşeri and Ünal (2010) was used as the measurement tool. There are 21 articles in the 5 point likert type scale. Working group of the research consists of 436 students studying in a total of ten primary schools in central Şarkışla county of Sivas province. According to the findings obtained from the research, there is no significant difference between writing dispositions of students and their parents' level of education. However, it has been determined that writing dispositions of students differ significantly based on their gender, the number of books they read within the last month, and the status of diary keeping. Suggestions that would contribute to increasing students' writing dispositions have been made according to the research findings.

### Keywords

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### Introduction

Language is the basic tool of communication consisting of the skills of understanding and expression. Information storage and effective thinking are also realized by language (Cüceloğlu, 2010, p. 226). Regarding this property of language, Güneş (2007, p. 24) defines language as "the heart of learning and an unlimited skill of human brain". Language is also the primary element that enables societies to become nations and provide the continuity of nations through mediating cultural transfer.

These individual and societal properties make language learning important. Because an effective language learning is required in order for countries and cultures to merge with other languages and cultures and for the people who construct the society to be in solidarity by establishing healthy relations with each other (Yalçın, 2002, p. 9). Native language teaching provides individuals with language skills that enable correct, clear, and effective communication and contribute to the processes of developing, enabling, and socialization of their power of thinking (Sever, 2000, p. 5). In this context, basic purposes of Turkish teaching are stated as "enabling the students to understand what they listen and read correctly; and to express their feelings and opinions correctly and in an organized way either orally or in written form within the means and rules of language" (Özbay, 2010, p. V).

People use written or spoken language when conveying their feelings and thoughts to another person. Writing and speaking skills compose the expression dimension of language. Writing skill is earned after speaking and reading skills (Coşkun, 2007, p. 49). According to White and Bruning (2005, p. 166), writing is a complicated child in the traditional curriculum family. Writing skill must be perceived and acknowledged not as a mechanical but rather as a critical thinking process (Demirel, 1999, p. 59). Because writing is a skill that takes place within cognitive area and includes learning,

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comprehension, practice, and the synthesis of new information (Defazio, Jones, Tennant & Hook, 2010, p. 34). Writing process is initiated by reviewing the structured information in the brain (Güneş, 2007, p. 159).

According to Bruning and Horn (2000), writing plays a key role in students' conceptual and linguistic development. Defazio, Jones, Tennant, and Hook (2010) evaluated writing from the perspectives of both an academic and a student. According to this, proper writing includes creative source of inspiration, problem solving, reflection, and correction beyond being in accordance with the spelling rules from the academic's perspective. From the student's perspective, writing is the written form of thoughts through the development of those by citation format, grammar, and spelling rules and making an effort.

Since the native language taught within the education system of a country is the teaching of the written language that is in accordance with spelling rules and grammatical properties, success of the studies on "writing" skill in a way means the comprehension and dissemination of standard language (Gömleksiz, Sinan, and Demir, 2010, p. 1167). The interest in writing is a strong source of motivation (Bruning & Horn, 2000, p. 30) and an important factor in writing studies' success. Interest in writing and having disposition to write are expressions that are supportive of each other. The word "disposition" is defined as "orientation towards loving, desiring, or doing something by heart, inclination, propensity, aptness" in the Big Turkish Dictionary (TDK, 2005, p. 605). With reference to this definition, "writing disposition" can be defined as loving writing, being inclined to writing, the status of desiring to write. Piazza and Siebert (2008, p. 275) consider this concept as a broad structure in an effective area providing resources such as self-discipline, being determined and making effort in hardship, autonomy, willing to take risk, motivation, self-sufficiency, and attention. According to Ziegler, Bain, Bell, McCallum, and Brian (2006, p. 60) the concept of "disposition" was used by psychologists in the past as the equivalent of the internal characteristics including temperament and character traits that may affect the interaction of the individual with his/her environment and other individuals.

Basic writing skills are required for interdisciplinary professional practices, and for this reason those are also a requirement for professional training (McGuire, Lay & Peters, 2009, p. 96). Therefore writing is not only a tool that enables information transfer but also the source of information (Tolchinsky, 2006, p. 84) and contributes to the development of the student's mental, linguistic, social, and mental independency skills (Güneş, 2007, p. 162). Research conducted to date in order to analyze the attitude and perceptions of students of different age groups towards writing and to evaluate their success in written expression (Anderson, Mallo, Nee & Wear, 2003; Cumberworth & Hunt, 1998; Garcia, Meyer & Walsh, 2002; Kapka & Oberman, 2001; Korbelt, 2001; Mills & Stevens, 1998) are generally based on the results obtained by the analysis of writing works of students and of the data obtained from various scales applied to students and teachers. Piazza and Siebert (2008, p. 276) state that the most well-known ones among the said scales are those that aim at measuring a writer's belief that he/she can exhibit a particular behavior to reach an objective and the self-sufficiency of the writer regarding writing. For this reason, this study is important in the sense that it presents the current situation and leading the studies to be conducted in order to develop writing skill.

The following questions were tried to be answered in this research conducted in order to analyze writing disposition levels of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students in terms of different variables:

- a. Do writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students differ significantly based on their gender?
- b. Do writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students differ significantly based on the number of the books read within the last month?
- c. Do writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students differ significantly based on their habit of diary keeping?
- d. Do writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students differ significantly based on the level of education of their mothers?
- e. Do writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students differ significantly based on the level of education of their fathers?

## Method

Research was structured in survey model that aims at “depicting a previously existed or currently existing situation as it exists”(Karasar, 1999, p. 77). After scale implementation permits were obtained from related units, schools were visited one by one, scale forms were handed to guidance counsellors, and they were informed about the implementation of the scale. Answering time for the scale is 15-18 minutes on average.

### *Study Group*

Study group of the research is composed of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students studying in a total of ten primary schools in Şarkışla county center of Sivas province during the fall semester of 2010-2011 academic year. Distribution of the study group on gender basis is given in Table 1.

**Table 1.**Demographic Distribution of the Study Group

Gender		6th grade
Girl	n	199
	%	29.7
Boy	n	237
	%	32.2
Total	n	436
	%	31.0

Of the total of 436 students that comprise the study group of the research, 199 are girls and 237 are boys.

### *Data Collection Tool*

“Writing Disposition Scale” developed by Piazza and Siebert (2008) and adapted to Turkish by İşeri and Ünal (2010) after the conduction of validity and reliability tests was used as the data collection tool. As a result of the factor analysis conducted during the adaptation of this scale, the first version of which composed of 93 articles, into Turkish, 20 articles in “passion” sub-dimension, 25 articles in “trust” sub-dimension, and 27 articles in “continuity” sub-dimension were removed from the scale for not being included in any factors and having a value below .50. Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated for the findings regarding the reliability of the scale and the coefficients .882 in passion sub-dimension; .734 in trust sub-dimension; and .639 in continuity sub-dimension were obtained in the entire scale. As a result of the factor analysis applied to the scale, three factors were obtained. The first factor explains 30,08%, the second factor explains 8,45%, and the third factor explains 7,73% of the total variance of the scale. It has been determined that the total of factor dimensions explains 46.26% of the scale (İşeri and Ünal, 2010). The scale, for which permission of use was obtained from researchers, is composed of 21 articles and 5 point Likert type.

### *Findings Regarding the Validity of the Scale*

In order to understand whether Writing Disposition Scale is appropriate for exploratory factor analysis, KMO and Barlett tests were conducted. Within this scope, results of KMO test must be .60 and above, and that of Barlett’s test of sphericity must statistically be significant (Jeong, 2004). As a result of this study, KMO test result was found to be .934 and Barlett’s test of sphericity to be (at  $P < 0.01$  level) significant and the result that exploratory factor analysis can be applied to the scale has been reached. Boundary value for the load values in the factor where articles are located in exploratory factor analysis was taken as .50, and in order to find the articles that give high correlation with factors and to be able to interpret the factors more easily varimax method among orthogonal rotation analyses was used by principle component analyses. Findings regarding exploratory factor analysis of Writing Disposition Scale are given in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Factor Analysis Results Regarding Writing Disposition Scale

Item No	Factor covariance	Faktor1 loading	Factor loading safter rotation			Corrected item-total correlation	Cronbach's alpha level
			Faktor1	Faktor2	Faktor3		
I1	,679	,642		,770		,590	
I2	,534	,571		,682		,524	
I3	,433	,568		,574		,519	.850
I4	,539	,497		,717		,446	
I5	,624	,507		,778		,465	
I6	,650	,571		,776		,513	
I7	,445				,664	,203	
I8	,635				,783	,287	.684
I9	,643				,787	,292	
I10	,481	,564			,512	,548	
I11	,535	,723	,663			,660	
I12	,689	,801	,787			,745	
I13	,683	,793	,781			,723	
I14	,637	,748	,778			,681	
I15	,670	,778	,783			,707	
I16	,627	,751	,755			,696	.934
I17	,504	,710	,601			,655	
I18	,468	,670	,629			,613	
I19	,644	,754	,781			,691	
I20	,695	,786	,808			,718	
I21	,588	,691	,752			,629	

Cronbach Alpha coefficient of the entire scale was found .917.

Three factors were obtained as a result of the factor analysis applied to Writing Disposition Scale. The first factor explains 31,22%, the second factor explains 17,87%, and the third factor explains 9,98% of the total variance regarding the scale. Total of the factor dimensions of the scale explains 59.07% of the scale.

Following factor rotation, the original scale and the dimensions and article numbers obtained in this study are the same, none of the articles were removed from the scale within this scope. It is observed that the first factor (passion) is composed of 11 articles, the second factor (trust) of 6 articles, and the third factor (continuity) of 4 articles. Load values of the articles in the first factor vary between 0,601–0,808; those in the second factor vary between 0,574–0,778; and those in the third factor vary between 0,512–0,787. According to the result obtained, the scale can said to be valid.

#### *Findings Regarding the Reliability of the Scale*

Cronbach Alpha coefficients were calculated for the findings regarding the reliability of the scale and the coefficients of .917 in the entire scale; .934 in passion sub-dimension; .850 in trust sub-dimension, and .684 in continuity sub-dimension have been obtained. Tezbaşaran (1997, p. 47) states that in a Likert type scale, a coefficient to be considered sufficient must be as close to 1 as it can be. According to these results, reliability of the scale can said to be high in passion and trust sub-dimensions whereas mid-level in continuity sub-dimension.

#### *Data Analysis*

Scale forms were given order numbers prior to the analysis of the data collected. Evaluations were made based on 436 scales. In data analysis, in order to calculate the scores of the answers given by students, "Totally disagree" is given 1, "Disagree" is given 2, "Undecided" is given 3, "Agree" is given 4, and "Totally agree" is given 5 points. The lowest score that can be obtained from the scale is

21 whereas the highest score is 105. As a result of analyses, the findings obtained for the problem sentence were interpreted based on the ranges of 1.00-1.79 *I totally disagree*, 1.80-2.59 *Disagree*, 2.60-3.39 *Undecided*, 3.40-4.19 *Agree*, 4.20-5.00 *Totally Agree*.

Findings regarding sub-problems were analyzed by independent sample t test and one-way variance analysis.

### Findings

Findings regarding the first question (Do writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students differ significantly based on their gender?) are given in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Results of Independent Sample t Test Indicating Differences of Students' Writing Dispositions Based on Gender

Gender	n	$\bar{x}$	s	t-value	P
Girl	199	3,78	,69	5,639	,000*
Boy	237	3,37	,81		

\*P<0.05

In examination of Table 3, it is seen that writing dispositions of students differ significantly based on their gender ( $t_{(436)}=5.639$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) and-based on averages- the difference is in favor of female students.

Findings regarding the second question (Do writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students differ significantly based on the number of books read within the last month?) of the research are given in table 4.

**Table 4.** Results of One-Way Variance Analysis (One Way ANOVA) Indicating Differences of Students' Writing Dispositions Based on the Number of Books read within the Last Month

Group	Sum of squares	sd	Mean square	f-value	P
Gruplararası	21,443	4	5,361	9.432	.000*
Grupiçi	244,954	431	,568		
Toplam	266,397	435			

\*P<0.05

According to Table 4, writing dispositions of students differ significantly based on the number of books they read within the last month ( $F_{(4-431)}=9.432$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). Results regarding the Scheffe test conducted in order to detect the source of difference are given in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Result of Scheffe Test Conducted to Detect the Source of Difference

(I) The book read	(J) The book read	The average difference (I-J)	P
Hiç	1-2	,28786	,883
	3-4	-,01708	1,000
	5-6	-,13239	,993
	6 and more	-,35697	,755
	Never	-,28786	,883
1-2	3-4	-,30494	,116
	5-6	-,42025*	,013
	6 and more	-,64483*	,000
	Never	,01708	1,000
3-4	1-2	,30494	,116
	5-6	-,11530	,874
	6 and more	-,33989*	,012
	Never	,13239	,993
5-6	1-2	,42025*	,013
	3-4	,11530	,874
	6 and more	-,22459	,289
	Never	,35697	,755
6 üstünde	1-2	,64483*	,000
	3-4	,28786	,883
	5-6	-,01708	1,000

In examination of Table 5, it is observed that there is a difference between the ones who read 1-2 books within the last month and the ones who read 5-6 and more than 6 books to the detriment of the former; and between the ones who read 3-4 books and more than 6 books to the detriment of the former.

Findings regarding the third question (Do writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students differ significantly based on their habits of diary keeping?) of the research are given in Table 6.

**Table 6.** Results of Independent Sample t Test Indicating the Difference of Students' Writing Dispositions Based on Their Status of Diary keeping

Diary	n	$\bar{x}$	s	T	p
I keep	249	3,65	,74	2,882	,004*
I don't keep	187	3,44	,82		

\*P<.0.05

Analysis results indicate that writing dispositions of students differ significantly based on their status of diary keeping ( $t_{(436)}=2.882$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The difference is in favor of those who keep a diary. Results regarding crosstabulation analysis made in order to determine gender distribution of students that keep a diary are given in Table 7.

**Table 7.** Results of Crosstabulation Analysis Indicating the Relation between the Status of Diary Keeping and Gender

Gender		Diary		Total
		I keep	I don't keep	
Girl	n	127	72	199
	%	51	38,5	45
Boy	n	122	115	237
	%	49	61,5	54,4
Total	n	249	187	436
	%	100	100	100

According to Table 7, it is observed that the ones who keep a diary are rather female students.

Findings regarding the fourth question (Do writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students differ significantly based on their mothers' level of education?) of the research are given in Table 8.

**Table 8.** Results of One Way Variance Analysis (One Way ANOVA) Indicating the Difference of Students' Writing Dispositions Based on Their Mothers' Level of Education

Group	Sum of squares	sd	Mean square	F	P
Between groups	3,742	3	1,247		
Within groups	261,309	428	,611	2.043	.107
Total	265,050	431			

According to Table 8, there is no significant difference between writing disposition of students and their mothers' level of education ( $F_{(3-428)}=2.043$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

Findings regarding the fifth question (Do writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students differ significantly based on their fathers' level of education?) of the research are given in Table 9.

**Table 9.** Results of One Way Variance Analysis (One Way ANOVA) Indicating the Difference of Students' Writing Dispositions Based on Their Fathers' Level of Education

Group	Sum of squares	sd	Mean square	F	P
Between groups	,389	3	,130		
Within groups	264,498	429	,617	.210	.889
Total	264,886	432			

According to Table 9, there is no significant difference between writing disposition of students and their fathers' level of education ( $F_{(3-429)}=.210$ ,  $p>0.05$ ).

## Discussion, Result and Suggestions

In this research, writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students were analyzed. Research findings present the relation between writing disposition and the variables of gender, habit of diary keeping, and parents' level of education.

According to the findings obtained in the research, writing dispositions of students differ significantly based on their gender in favor of female students. This can be thought to be based on girls being able to express themselves more comfortably compared to boys and to share their feelings more easily. Similar results were obtained in various research conducted in order to evaluate writing skills of primary school students. Zorbaz (2010, p. 197) found that girls enjoy writing more than boys do, have lower levels of prejudice regarding writing, are less worried about the evaluation of their written expressions, and like sharing their written expressions with the people around them. According to Clark and Dugdale (2009, p. 5), boys are far behind girls in terms of writing skills and express rather negative attitude towards writing compared to girls. Findings obtained in the study conducted by Pajares and Valiante (1997) on 5<sup>th</sup> grade students indicate that there is no difference in writing performances of girls and boys yet girls find writing more beneficial compared to boys and they have stronger individual sufficiency. In their studies, İşeri (2010), Tüfekçioğlu (2010), Tabak and Topuzkanamış (2014) also determined that disposition of girls is rather positive compared to that of boys. Research finding in hand is similar to the results of that study. Moreover, Temur (2006, p. 67) argues that teachers consider different levels of interest and curiosity based on gender among the factors that develop students' vocabulary. For this reason, it is considered that the gender variable in the study may also affect writing disposition.

Richness of vocabulary is an important factor that affects the success of written expression. Reading enriches vocabulary and feeds imagination. Teachers think that reading lots of books and daily newspapers out of class hours improve students' vocabulary (Temur, 2006, p. 66). In line with the thought that writing is a skill supported by reading, the relation between students' writing dispositions and the number of books they read within the last month was examined. According to the findings, as the number of books read within the last month increases, level of writing disposition increases as well. Reading and writing are correlated to a great extent (Fitzgerald and Shanahan, 2000, p. 42). According to Baş and Şahin (2012), there is a significant difference between students' reading attitudes and writing dispositions. There are other studies which found that there is a significant relation between writing dispositions of 6<sup>th</sup> grade students and their frequency of reading books (Tabak and Topuzkanamış, 2014). According to Yılmaz (2008) and Sallabaş (2009), written expression skills of primary school students differ in favor of those who have a library at home. According to Yaman (2010), students who "never" read have greater writing anxiety compared to those who read "3-4 books a month". In evaluation of the activity of "reading" being supportive of writing, current research finding can be said to be in parallel with those findings.

In order for writing anxiety to be overcome and writing to become a habit, students need to do writing practice as an extracurricular activity (Coşkun, 2007, p. 54; Temur, 2006, p. 66). In this context, it is thought that diary keeping may develop writing skill and therefore it can also improve writing disposition. Hence the current research finding indicates that students' writing dispositions differ based on the status of diary keeping in favor of those who keep a diary. Zorbaz (2010, p. 199) found that students who do not keep a diary enjoy writing less than those who do, have higher level of prejudice against writing, and either less or do not enjoy sharing their written expressions with other people. Büyükkiz (2007, p. 84) argues that the rate of incomprehensibility in the essays of students who keep a diary is very close to that in the essays of students who do not keep a diary and there is no statistically significant difference between those; however, in examination of averages, it has been found that students who do not keep a diary have more problems of incomprehensibility compared to those who keep a diary. According to this, current research finding can be said to be supportive of the said findings. Besides, in the current research, it has been determined that those who keep a diary are mostly girls. This is a finding in parallelism with the gender variable of the research.

Parents being interested in the extracurricular writing activities of the child, helping him/her in writing good and accurately, and preparing appropriate environment contribute to the child's writing skill. Brashears (2008, p. 14) argues that the determination of the perspectives of parents regarding their children's writings is useful in terms of understanding whether factors other than interest and caring are effective in the development of writing skill. In various studies, significant differences were found between students' success in written expression and their parents' level of education, and it was determined that as parents' level of education increases, child's success in written expression increases as well (Temur, 2006; Yılmaz, 2008; Sallabaş, 2009; Tüfekçioğlu, 2010; Baş and Şahin, 2013). In this research, it is observed that there is not a significant difference between writing disposition levels of students and their parents' level of education. According to Zorbaz (2010, p. 100), writing anxiety total score of primary school students do not significantly differ statistically based on their parents' level of education. However, in consideration of the fact that students' habits of reading and keeping diary may be related to their parents' level of education –even though no statistical relation is observed- these variables can also be thought to have affected the results indirectly.

According to the findings obtained in the research the following suggestions have been developed:

1. Parents must support extracurricular writing activities of their children. This support can be realized by giving the child a notebook that he/she can use as a diary as a present or awarding the child in return for the good essays he/she writes, and this would increase writing disposition.

2. Teachers and parents must encourage children for reading. In order to remove the difference of writing disposition based on gender, having books of the kind that would attract male students' attention (mechanical structures, science fiction, detective etc.) in the learning environment might be effective.

3. For the purpose of shedding light on arrangements aimed at removing gender difference, it is thought that conducting studies to determine the reasons why writing dispositions of male students are lower compared to that of female students would be appropriate in terms of future research.

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