



CORRELATION BETWEEN ELEMENTARY STUDENTS' READING ATTITUDES AND THEIR WRITING DISPOSITIONS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the correlation between elementary students' reading attitudes and their writing dispositions and to determine to what extent students' reading attitudes predict their writing dispositions. Four hundred and fifteen students from six elementary schools in Nigde, Turkey participated in the study. Students were chosen randomly. In this study, the Reading Attitudes and Writing Dispositions scales were used in order to collect data to answer the research questions. The correlative investigation model was adopted in the research. The Pearson moment's correlation coefficient analysis showed that there was a positive significant correlation between students' reading attitudes and their writing dispositions. It was also found that students' reading attitudes were a significant predictor of their writing dispositions.

Keywords: Reading attitude, writing disposition, elementary education, and correlation.

INTRODUCTION

Language teaching is considered as a whole with some skills and encompasses activities that are directed towards improving students' cognitive, affective, and kinaesthetic characteristics (Sever, 2004). So, the purpose in first language (L₁) teaching in elementary schools is to ensure that language skills (listening, writing, speaking and writing) are used in the most affective and competent manner (Aslan, 2007). The most important element in order to make students gain these language skills at school is the curriculum (Demirel, 2003).

Reading comprehension level of Turkish students was found to be under international standards in examinations carried out in international arenas such as the PIRLS (MEB, 2003). Because of this academic failure of Turkish students in international examinations, the Turkish Education System has been revised and the elementary and high school curricula have been renewed under the light of international educational progresses in order to develop students' academic skills such as writing and reading. Thus, the Ministry of National Education, known as MEB developed a new elementary curriculum in order to educate students to make them gain necessary language skills in courses such as Turkish, social sciences, foreign languages, etc. This new elementary curriculum especially focused on the development of students' writing and reading skills in an integrated manner to make students individuals who both read and write in their daily lives.

According to Allen & Bruton (1998), reading is complex process of making meaning from a text, for variety of purposes and in a wide range of contexts. Reading is a psycholinguistic process in that it starts with a linguistic surface representation encoded by a writer and ends with meaning which the reader constructs (Goodman, 1995). In this sense, as Keçik & Uzun (2004) state that in communication based on language, neither sounds and words nor sentences take on a table by themselves and that the basic unit of linguistic communication is texts and that individuals use texts in communication with one another. For this purpose, developing language skills not only requires



mastering on reading, but also it requires individuals to write effectively on what they read. Therefore, care must be given for the development of writing skills as well as reading skills in a curriculum. In this regard, Özbay (2007) defines writing as the expression of emotions, thoughts, wants, needs and events according to certain symbols based on certain rules by pointing out that the act of writing is necessary.

Although reading is a receptive and writing is a productive language skill (Demirel, 2003; Özbay, 2007), it is stated that there is a strong correlation between these two language skills in the related literature. Reading and writing are inseparable skills for language teaching. Reading and writing skills cannot be separated from one another just as listening and speaking skills. For example, Carson (1990) examined this issue and convincingly showed that reading influences writing, that writing influences reading, and that they interactively influence one another. As individuals begin to read, they get information and create a personal understanding based on what he/she read, and then they tend to put down their understanding as a written form. In other words, individuals receive information from reading and they put down what they think, know and understand by writing. However, individuals must start reading first by having positive attitudes towards reading. According to Kush, Marley & Brookhart (2005), students' attitudes towards reading are the leading factor that directly affects their reading comprehension and productive skill such as writing. Therefore, it has been determined that students who have positive attitudes towards reading tend to write on what they read.

When the related literature is viewed, it can be seen that there are some studies both on reading attitudes (Keleş, 2006; Topçu, 2007; Balcı, 2009; Ünal, 2010) and writing dispositions (Bağcı, 2007; Arıcı & Ungan, 2008; İşeri, 2010; Ünal, 2010) of students in the Turkish Education System. However, the number of the studies on the correlation between reading attitudes and writing dispositions of students is very few and they all focused on the correlation between reading and writing skills, not on their reading attitudes and writing dispositions. Because of this, further studies on this very issue are needed to be carried out in order to create a more effective curriculum regarding reading and writing in an integrated manner at elementary school. Hence, the purpose of this research can be stated to investigate the correlation between elementary students' reading attitudes and their writing dispositions. In order to establish a correlation between reading attitudes and writing dispositions, the following questions were posed in the study:

- (1) Is there a significant correlation between students' reading attitudes and writing dispositions?
- (2) What is the predictive level of students' reading attitudes for their writing dispositions?

METHODOLOGY

The correlative investigation model was used in the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This model is one of the most commonly applied models in the related literature (Cohen et al., 2003). The correlative investigation model is used to determine the correlation between different variables in educational and social research (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2000) and aims to identify the existence or level of coordinated change between two or more variables (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).



Participants

The population of this study consisted of students in elementary schools during the 2011-2012 academic year within the borders of Nigde province. In order to detect the sampling of the study, from elementary schools in cosmos, 415 students from six public elementary schools were chosen according to random sampling method (Karasar, 2005). In order to detect the sampling of the study, elementary schools in cosmos were chosen according to three-layer group sampling method according to socio-economic structure (high-middle-low) of their region, volunteered to participate in the research (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). The participants were assured for the anonymity and confidentiality for their responses in the study. Of the total, 223 (%53.74) of the students were females and 192 (%46.26) of the students were males.

Instruments

In order to answer the research questions in the study, “the Reading Attitude Scale” (Ünal, 2006) and “the Writing Dispositions Scale” (Piazza & Siebert, 2008) were used in the study. The information for these scales is given below.

The Reading Attitude Scale

In this study, “the Reading Attitude Scale”, developed by Ünal (2006) was used in order to collect data to answer the research questions. The scale consists of 25 items with a five-likert type. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as .90. The higher the total score on the scale, the higher the level of attitudes towards reading of students.

The Writing Dispositions Scale

In this study, “the Writing Dispositions Scale”, developed by Piazza & Siebert (2008) and adapted into Turkish by İşeri & Ünal (2010) was used in order to collect data to answer the research questions. The scale consists of 21 items with a five-likert type. The Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient of the scale was calculated as .89. The higher the total score on the scale, the higher the level of writing dispositions of students.

Data Analysis

The Pearson moment’s correlation coefficient analysis was used to determine the correlation between variables and the regression analysis to determine the prediction level of students’ reading attitudes for their writing dispositions.

FINDINGS

In this part of the research, the correlation between students’ reading attitudes and their writing dispositions and the prediction level of students’ reading attitudes for students’ writing dispositions were presented. Thus, the first sub-question of the research was “Is there a significant correlation between students’ reading attitudes and writing dispositions?” In order to answer this sub-question, the correlation coefficient analysis was conducted in the research. For this purpose, the correlation between students’ reading attitudes and their writing dispositions is presented in Table 1 below.



Table 1. Correlations matrix of reading attitudes for writing disposition

	Writing Dispositions	
Reading Attitudes	<i>r</i>	.730**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to the finding of the research in relation to correlation between students' reading attitudes and their writing dispositions, it was found out a significant positive high correlation between students' reading attitudes and their writing dispositions [$r = .730, p < .01$]. As an increase in the total score on the reading attitudes scale represents a more positive attitudes towards reading, so it may be stated that an increase on the total score of the reading attitudes affects students' writing dispositions positively. In the same way, it may also be suggested that the more positive attitudes students have towards reading, the more positive dispositions of students towards writing is observed. On the other hand, step-wise regression analysis was used in order to measure the prediction level of students' reading attitudes for their writing dispositions and the result obtained in the study is presented in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Prediction of reading attitudes for writing dispositions

	B	Std. Error	β	t	Sig.
(Constant)	19.825	4.304		4.607	.000
Writing Dispositions	1.132	.054	.730	21.121	.000

Note: $R = .730, R^2 = .532, F(1.392) = 446.079, p = .000$

In terms of the regression analysis of students' attitudes towards reading for their writing dispositions, it was found out that students' reading attitudes were a significant predictor of students' writing dispositions and approximately fifty four percent of the total variance for students' writing dispositions was explained by their reading attitudes [$R = .730, R^2 = .532, p < .01$]. In the light of the data gathered, it can be stated that students' reading attitudes appear to be a significant predictor for their dispositions on writing.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

It is believed that reading attitudes develop writing dispositions in the related literature. According to Stotsky (1983), better writers tend to read more than poorer writers do, and that better readers tend to produce more syntactically mature writing than poorer readers do. As the constructivist learning theory asserts that writing and reading are both meaning-making activities (Gregg & Steinberg, 1980). When people write and read, meaning is continually in a state of becoming. Thus, the more students read, the more they are acquainted with reading passages and the more they tend to write in the form of reading passages that they have studied and/or read. In this sense, according to the results obtained in the research, it was found out that there was a significant positive high correlation [$r = .730, p < .01$] between students' attitudes towards reading and their writing dispositions. In studies carried out by Goodman & Goodman (1983), Stotsky (1983) and Carrel, Devine & Eskey (1988), it was found out a strong correlation between students' reading and their writing skills. Similarly, Loban (1963) in his longitudinal study of students' reading and writing development indicated strong correlation between reading and writing skills. As Loban (1963)



stated, students who wrote more well also read well, and that the converse was true. Further, these correlations become even more pronounced across the school grades. The results obtained from the related literature are paralleled to the related finding in relation to correlation between reading attitudes and writing dispositions of this research. Hence, it can be stated in the light of the finding in the research, the more input the students are exposed to reading, the more positive transfer into their writing performance results.

On the other hand, in terms of the regression analysis result of reading attitudes for writing dispositions, it was found out that students' reading attitudes were a significant predictor [$R = .730$, $R^2 = .532$, $p < .01$] for their writing dispositions. So, it can be stated that reading and writing are integrated language skills and reading attitudes affect student's writing dispositions positively. Students' positive reading attitudes can lead them to reading, thus they can be intended to write on what they read and thought. In this regard, Krashen (1993) stressed the importance of reading as a means of language acquisition and writing development. Therefore, it is possible to see that the more students read, the more they are acquainted with reading passages and books and the more they intend to write in the form of reading passages and books they have read and/or studied. Shanahan (1984) also found out that reading and writing affect one another since they both share structural components that can be acquired in one domain and then applied in the other. As Chall & Jacobs (1983) suggested that reading and writing were strongly correlated and these two domains had an impact upon one another, with implications for enhancing learning.

As a result of this research, it can be recommended that instruction should be held with reading and writing in support for each other in order to develop students' reading attitudes then make them write on what they read and think. It can also be recommended that the correlation amongst reading attitudes, writing dispositions and other skills of language such as speaking and listening are analysed in other level or grade of education.

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