

The Relation General Anxiety Levels, Anxiety of Writing, and Attitude for Turkish Course of Secondary School Students

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Abstract

This study analyzed whether secondary-school students' continuous and stationary anxieties predict their anxiety about writing and their attitudes about courses in Turkish. The research participants consisted of 281 students in Sakarya Province, 58% male and 42% female. The personal descriptive survey model was used for the research. As data collection tools, the Scale of Writing Anxiety, the Continuous-Stationary Anxiety Inventory, and the Attitude Scale for Turkish Courses were used. The multiple regression method determined positive correlation between writing anxiety, and stationary and continuous anxieties. When students' writing anxiety increased, their stationary and continuous anxieties also increased. In contrast, a negative correlation was determined between writing anxiety and attitudes about Turkish courses. Furthermore, as students' writing anxiety increased, their attitudes about Turkish courses changed negatively. The research findings were discussed within the scope of writing in related fields, and suggestions to decrease students' writing anxiety were made. Finally, suggestions to prevent students' writing anxiety from negatively affecting their attitudes about Turkish courses were also included.

Key Words

Anxiety of Writing, Attitudes for Turkish Course, Continuous Anxiety, Stationary Anxiety, Secondary School Students.

In different studies, writing is described as the narration of feelings, thoughts, and experiences by means of different symbols within certain rules (Aktaş & Gündüz, 2004; Boydak, 2004, p. 136; Coşkun, 2007, p. 50; Daly & Shamo, 1978; Demirel, 1999a, p. 59; Göğüş, 1978; Güleriyüz, 2002, p. 21; İnal, 2006; Korkmaz, 1988; Özbay, 2006, p. 121; Yalçın, 1999). According to Rao (2007) while writing skill encourages students to think and forces them to create and summarize new ideas, it also strengthens thinking during learning. Socio-cognitive writing models emphasize the importance

of the social environment on writing (Hayes, 1996; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). In other words, students' interactions with their friends and classmates contribute to create convincing text (Harris, Graham, & Mason, 2006).

While the act of writing can cause anxiety (Pennebaker & Beall, 1986), various other studies (Guastella & Dadds, 2008; Hemenover, 2003; Kenardy & Piercy, 2006; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Sloan & Marx, 2004; Sloan, Marx, & Epstein, 2005; Sloan, Marx, Epstein, & Lexington, 2007) mention (Piercy, 2006; Pennebaker & Beall, 1986; Sloan &

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Marx, 2004; Sloan, Marx, & Epstein, 2005; Sloan, Marx, Epstein, & Lexington, 2007) that it can decrease traumatic stress, depression, and anxiety. As a therapeutic method, writing contributes to the mental health of the 28% of the population that commonly experience anxiety disorders, among other psychological diseases, during certain periods of their lives (Kessler, Chia, Demler, & Walters, 2005). Anxiety disorder affects people's lives negatively in its physical and social aspects (Hays & Morales, 2001). Moreover, studies (Harris & Coy, 2003; McCraty, 2003) show that anxiety at high levels decreases academic success. Studies also show that anxiety around language learning is related to general anxiety level (Horwitz, 2001; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1989, 1991; Woodrow, 2011) and other research (Bandura, 1986, 1997; Schunk, 2007) show that thoughts about possible failure affect one's self-sufficiency perception.

Continuous anxiety is described as "perception of a stressful condition as dangerous or threatening and increase in frequency of stationary sensual reactions and density and gaining continuity" (Özgülven, 2000). Continuous anxiety is not observed in a person's behavior. However, it can be perceived from the intensity and frequency of stationary anxiety reactions that can be identified at different times and conditions (Öner & Le Compte, 1983).

Some educational studies show that students' anxiety levels are related to perfectionistic feelings (Alldrich, 1982; Arthur & Hayward, 1997; Brown et al., 1999; Einstein, Lovibond, & Gaston, 2000; Frost & Marten, 1990; Hayward & Arthur, 1998; Hewitt & Flett, 1991; Kawamura, Hunt, Frost, & DiBartolo, 2001; Saboonchi & Lundh, 1997). Like anxiety, perfectionism is a long-term pathologic problem (Burns, 1980; Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Furthermore, anxiety about writing consists of mental, contextual, and situational attitudes (Riffe & Stacks, 1992, p. 40). Students who have writing anxiety at the highest level are generally avoiding compulsory writing, and thus they become anxious (Daly, 1978; Daly & Miller, 1975; Daly & Shamo, 1976, 1978; Richmond & Dickson-Markman, 1985; Rose, 1984).

According to studies (Graves, 1994; Routman, 1996; Sommers, 1994) on writing events evaluated in traditional grammar and speech patterns, children fear writing due to making mistakes and being criticized harshly. Some research (Book, 1976; Daly, 1977; Petrosko, Kaiser, & Dietrich, 1984) shows that persons with high levels of anxiety about writing

compose shorter, more syntactically superficial sentences and use language expressions at a low level because they worry more about controlling what they write than do those who have low levels of writing anxiety. Studies (Daly, 1985; Lee & Krashen, 1997; Martinez, Kock, & Cass, 2011) reveal that students with high levels of writing anxiety receive low scores on homework and written examinations. Furthermore, their other scores tend to remain at low levels (Powell, 1984).

Attitude is a learned tendency that causes a person to show certain behaviors and reactions against certain people, objects, and conditions; attitudes often continue for quite a while and are preparatory for behavior (Demirel, 2001; Kağıtçıbaşı, 1988; Tavşancıl, 2005). When positive and negative situations change, cognitive and behavioral perception for that object is re-arranged (İnceoğlu, 1993, p. 15; Karasakaloğlu & Saracaloğlu, 2009, p. 345; Tural, 2005). Thus, affective behaviors about courses are as important as cognitive behaviors. Affective behaviors consist of students' attitudes, values, motivations, incentives, and so on. (Özkal, Güngör, & Çetingöz, 2004, p. 602) Motivation, one of the principles of learning, is related to attention and attitude, cognitive awareness, and self-control (Gelen, 2004). Importantly however, persons are not born with attitudes on the efficiency of teaching; they gain these attitudes later (Belet, 2005, p. 19).

Research (Sawkins, 1971; Thompson, 1981) has demonstrated that writing causes anxiety. However, the act of writing requires organizational skills that force a person give a decisions. In another study (Fritzsche, Young, & Hickson, 2003) signify a relation between one's general anxiety level and anxiety about writing. Various research has stated that positive attitudes for writing courses affect academic success positively (Çavuş & Yaşar, 2010; Çörek, 2006; Kaya, Arslantaş, & Şimşek, 2009; Şahin & Yaşar, 2010). In this context, this research aimed to determine whether secondary-school students' continuous and stationary anxieties predict their anxiety about writing and their attitudes about courses in Turkish.

Method

The Model of Research

The model for this research is a relational survey model, which provides actual cause-and-affect relationships and enables knowing another on the condition of knowing the situation of variance (Karasar, 2006).

Working Groups

According to Kline (2005), in models whose data range in a normal way and have a high level of relationship among variances, an experimental number approximately ten times greater than the variance number is adequate (as cited in Şimşek, 2007). In this research, the convenience sampling method was used (Bayram, 2009). Participants in this study were 281 secondary school students, 58% male ($N = 166$) and 42% female ($N = 115$).

Data Collecting Tool

Continuous-Stationary Anxiety Inventory: The Turkish version of the Continuous-Stationary Anxiety Inventory that was initially improved by Spielberger and colleagues, with the aim of recognizing stationary and continuous anxiety levels separately was revised by Öner and Le Compte (1983). The self-evaluation scale contains 40 items from two different scales. In this study, the items were rated using a Likert-type scale, with a score of 1 indicating the lowest anxiety level and a score of 4, the highest.

Writing Anxiety Scale: The Writing Anxiety Scale was improved by Yaman (2010). The scale is composed from 19 items that explain 35% of the total variance, collected under a single factor. The chi square value ($\chi^2 = 557.54$, $sd = 151$, $p = 0.00$) was substantive in factor analysis, conducted to affirm the single factorial structure. Relative fit index was RMSEA = .059, CFI = .92, IFI = .92, GFI = .93, AGFI = .91, and SRMR = .050. The coefficient of consistence of writing anxiety was .80 for the entire scale. The scale's items and total correlations range between .30 and .52.

Attitude Scale for Turkish Course: The Turkish Attitude Scale was developed by Demirel (1999b, p. 153). This scale's Cronbach's alpha reliability co-efficient of validation and reliability studies conducted by Demirel was $\alpha: 0.85$.

Proceeding

In this research, the relationship among continuous, stationary, and writing anxiety was determined using multiple regression analysis. Data was analyzed using the normal distribution for normality hypothesis, Q-Q graphic affects using skewness, kurtosis, and histogram graphics. Normal distribution was observed in all variances based on these parameters.

Findings

A positive relation ($r=.43$, $*p<.01$) between stationary and continuous anxiety was observed. Furthermore, writing anxiety ($r=.35$, $p<.01$) showed a positive relationship to stationary anxiety and continuous anxiety ($r=.40$, $p<.01$)

According to the results of multiple regression analysis that predicted writing anxiety, at the first level, continuous anxiety explains 16% of writing anxiety; at the second level, stationary anxiety explains 4% of writing anxiety. With the mentioned variances, the general anxiety level explains 16% of writing anxiety.

According to Pearson correlation results on attitudes of writing anxiety and Turkish courses, negative correlation ($r=-.17$, $*p<.01$) was observed between writing anxiety and Turkish courses.

Discussion

The research process attempted to determine any relationship between secondary-school students' continuous and stationary anxiety levels and writing anxiety level and attitudes about Turkish courses. First, writing anxiety correlates positively with stationary and continuous anxiety. When students' writing anxiety increased, stationary and continuous anxieties increased as well. According to Houpp (2009), from a psychodynamic perspective, the roots of writing anxiety are based on students' first writing experiences. The student's stationary anxiety during the first writing experience becomes continuous anxiety in succeeding experiences. Such continuous anxiety about writing in students' psychological structure is likely always to affect their writing behavior.

In contrast, writing anxiety also affects student motivation, their willingness to enroll in writing courses, and to choose professions based on writing (Martinez et al., 2011). When the stationary anxiety that students felt during their first writing experience becomes continuous anxiety, their writing motivation and willingness can decrease. Therefore, interventions that decrease students' writing anxiety are needed (Davis, Eshelman, & McKay 2000). Again, studies (Rechtien & Dizinno, 1998; Wynn, 2000) have found that teachers of writing and students' peers play crucial role in decreasing their anxiety and developing writing skills.

Another finding revealed in this research is a negative relation between writing anxiety and attitudes about Turkish courses. When students' writing anxiety increased, attitudes about Turkish courses changed negatively. Of course, Turkish being the mother-tongue, it is the main learning tool in all courses. One source of negative attitudes towards this main learning tool is writing anxiety. According to Yaman (2010, p. 272) writing skills perceived as having the highest difficulty level among language skills cause negative attitudes toward its processes. These processes of writing skills can affect students' writing skills negatively and cause anxiety about writing experiences. This anxiety can affect students' attitudes towards Turkish courses in negative way, as well.

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