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The relationship between writing achievement and the use of reading comprehension strategies in the 4th and 5th grades of primary schools

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Abstract

Problem Situation: Writing is the written expression of emotions, thoughts, desires and schemes, which requires skill rather than knowledge. However, skillful writing is a multidimensional process, and requires a desire for writing. On the other hand, it is a process which demands hard work, intensive reading, making inferences from the materials read and a long practice. Many students express their thoughts in written form with great difficulty. There are many reasons for this attitude toward writing; and one of them might be insufficient reading comprehension. Reading needs an effective mental process. And an accomplished reader uses some strategies for comprehensive reading, such as relating the text to one's own experience, summarizing the information, concluding and asking questions on the text, and so on. An effective reading process will most probably influence one's writing achievement.

Purpose of the Study: Purpose of this study is to find out the relationship between writing achievement and levels of using reading comprehension strategies in the 4th and 5th grades of primary schools.

Method of the Study: In the study with the 4th and 5th grade primary school children, a descriptive method was used to determine the extant situation and the relationship between writing achievement and levels of using reading comprehension strategies.

Sampling: We studied with student subjects (Female: 649, Male: 667) of the 4th and 5th grades in 15 primary schools in Denizli. Of the 1316 subjects, 49.3 % were females, and 50.7, males. We applied Stratified Sampling Method to determine the sample group.

Data Collecting Instrument: In this study, we gave three separate themes to the students to see how they express their thoughts in written form, and used the "Essay Assessment Form (EAF)" and the "Scale of Reading Comprehension Strategies (SRCS) for the assessment of these essays. This form included 16 criteria evaluated out of 100 points.

Analysis and Interpretation of the Data: Obtained written products have been assessed with the above-mentioned criteria and read by two lecturers, one of them being the researcher. Consistency coefficient of both grades has been calculated as 0.81. We examined the correlation between the points obtained from the Scale of Reading Comprehension Strategies (SRCS) and those obtained from the written products. When we observed the results of simple linear regression analysis, we saw that using reading comprehension strategies was a significant predictive of writing achievement [$R=0.796$, $R^2=0.63$, $F=2279.56$, $p<.01$]. In the light of the results we obtained, 63% of the total variance observed in connection with writing achievement could be explained by the students' levels of using reading comprehension strategies. Also, there was a linear correlation between both variables.

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Keywords: Writing achievement; reading comprehension strategies; relationship; primary education.

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1. Introduction

“Writing is the written expression of thoughts, desires, emotions, and schemes; and this requires skill rather than knowledge” (Öz, 2006: 251). Writing helps individuals’ communication needs as well as their learning. As writing skills of students develop, they begin to apply their knowledge to the written expression more and more easily and go beyond what they have learnt (Raimes, 1983). According to Dyson (1995), writing is not merely an individual activity but a process which requires social interaction. And Rayers (1987) maintains that the fledgeling young who begins to write should “write in a shared way” to accelerate the process. So the learner will develop a better technical point of view toward writing and have an increased awareness of his/her own responsibilities. One of the key factors which affect writing is the reading habits. In the teaching-learning process in schools, most of the learning instruments are the sources based on the language, and this puts an increased emphasis on the reading comprehension levels of students. Research findings showing a high correlation between reading comprehension and academic success also support this view (Demirel, 1993). Recent studies show that an effective and good reader experiences “a constructive process” by using various mental activities. Organization strategies of the learners, and their active participation in their learning process are highly effective both on the comprehensive reading and on the realization of learning (Keer&Verhaeghe, 2005; Wormeli, 2004; Allen 2003; Harvey and Goodvis 2002; Senemoğlu, 2001). In fact, a successful writing process has a close relationship with effective reading comprehension. Reading comprehension enables students to become lifelong literates (Belet, Yaşar, 2007). And an effective reading process is based on using reading comprehension strategies effectively (Allen, 2003; Keer&Verhaeghe, 2005). To have successful reading comprehension strategies, a good reader should effectively practice some processes such as relating the text to his/her own experience, summarizing information, concluding, and raising questions about the text (Allen, 2003; Keer&Verhaeghe, 2005). “Understanding of the text by the reader depends on the use of the cognitive and metacognitive strategies effectively (Dole, Dufy, Roehler&Pearson, 1991; Harvey&Goodvis 2002; Allen, 2003; Schunk and Zimmerman, 1994). Effective readers use reading comprehension strategies skillfully. Because of the statements mentioned above, individuals who are more successful in reading comprehension are more successful in a lifelong literacy.

The purpose of this study is to find whether there is a relationship between writing achievement and levels of using reading comprehension strategies in the 4th and 5th grades of primary schools.

2. Method

In this study, we use a descriptive method to determine the situation in line with the purpose of the study (Büyüköztürk, 2002; Karasar, 2005).

2.1. Sampling

This research has been carried out with the 4th and 5th grades of primary schools in Denizli. To determine the sample group, we have used the “Stratified Sampling Method.” The scale has been applied to 1316 (Female: 649, Male: 667) students in total. 49.3 % of the subjects were female, and 50.7 %, male.

2.2. Data collecting instruments

In collecting the data, the “Essay Assessment Form (EAF)” and the “Scale of Reading Comprehension Strategies” (SRCS) developed by the researcher has been used.

To prepare the EAF, initially, we set the essay writing criteria. Later, we presented these criteria to seven expert lecturers from different fields and to five class teachers for assessment purposes. Taking the views of these experts into consideration, we determined the criteria of the EAF under three headings: style, expression, and spelling & punctuation. In the form, there are eighteen criteria in total – two in the first part, fourteen in the second, and two in the third. Two lecturers – one of them being the researcher – read the written products of the students which had been assessed by using the criteria in the EAF. Consistency coefficients of both markings have been calculated as 0.81.

Pretest study of the the “Reading Comprehension Strategies Scale” (SRCS) developed by Mrs. Susar Kırmızı (2006) has been carried out with 390 students. The KMO value of the scale has been found as 0.81. When we applied the

rotated factor analysis to the data obtained, we saw that the factor load-value varied between 0.44 and 0.75. For example, while Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.88, the two half consistency coefficients were 0.87.

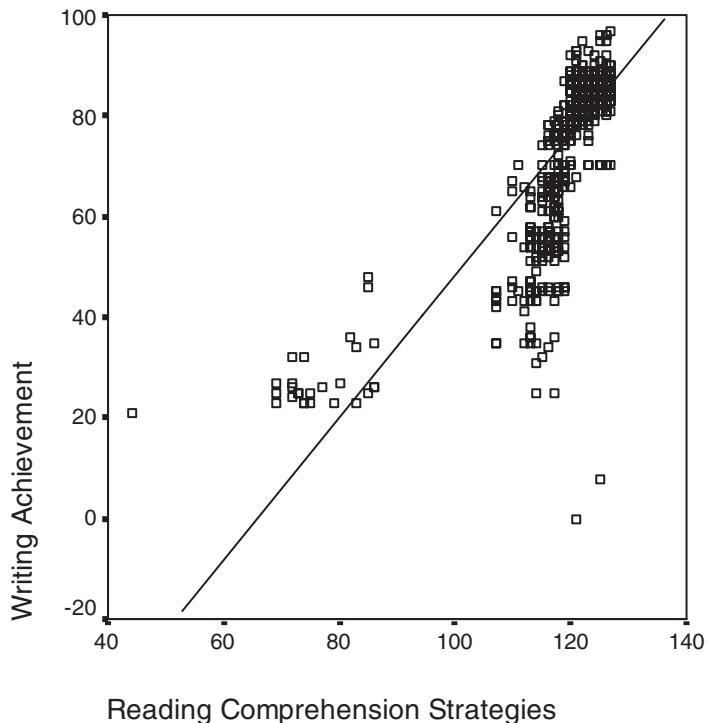
2.3. Data analysis techniques

In this study, to provide validity and reliability of the form and scale, we used correlation, arithmetical mean, standard deviation, item-scale correlation in the factor analysis, and Cronbach's Alpha and regression statistical techniques.

3. Findings and implication

When we examine the results of simple regression analysis to understand whether there is a correlation between writing achievement and reading comprehension strategies, we see that using reading comprehension strategies is a significant predictive of writing achievement [$R=0.796$, $R^2=0.63$, $F=2279.56$, $p<.01$]. In the light of the obtained results, we may indicate that the 63% of the total variance about writing achievement could be explained by the students' levels of using reading comprehension strategies. To understand whether the correlation was linear or not, we carried out analyses in order to obtain a scatter diagram. Below is the table obtained by the analyses we carried out.

Table 1. Scatter Diagram and Regression Line for the Variables of Writing Achievement and Levels of Using Reading Comprehension Strategies.



According to Table 1, we can say that there is a linear correlation between writing achievement and levels of using reading comprehension strategies. Dots which show the values of the subjects concerning two variables gather around a line.

4. Conclusion and Suggestion

Improving the skills of writing and reading is gaining an increased importance. Primary school years have a particular importance in this respect because linguistic skills develop during these years. Reading and writing skills which will be taught in the first years of the primary education will be effective on students' lifelong literacy. Furthermore, giving an exceptional importance to reading activities, studies and exercises aimed at using reading comprehension strategies will have a positive effect on other linguistic skills as well as reading.

According to the results of the study, we explain 63% of the total variance about writing achievement by the students' levels of using reading comprehension strategies. To put it shortly, in accordance with the results of this study, a successful writing process depends on students' levels of using reading comprehension strategies. Students who have effective reading habits could display this skill in their writing works. The results obtained from this study also support the previously conducted studies (Belet&Yaşar, 2007; Champley 2005; Lin, 1999). Reading comprehension strategies require active participation of the reader by focusing on the process and product of reading. Full comprehension of the text by the reader depends on using cognitive and metacognitive strategies effectively (Dole, Dufy, Roehler&Pearson, 1991; Harvey&Goodvis, 2002; Schunk&Zimmerman, 1994). If the learner is not an effective reader, he/she will most probably encounter a lot of problems in the realization of the mental process required by learning because reading, particularly comprehensive reading, demands some mental efforts beyond just seeing (Susar Kırmızı, 2008). Students' participation in this 'constructive process' increases its own achievement related with the comprehension of the text to be read. The success reached in reading comprehension studies considerably enables the reader to better interpret a given text. Therefore, a student who has a developed reading comprehension can both put forward creative ideas in his/her writing studies and also express his/her ideas better.

Once the reading strategy training and the writing exercises are combined, the expected outcome will naturally be achieved: effective writing. For the student who uses those strategies will be able to discuss the text, make contextual inferences, visualize the text, state the main idea and analyze the accuracy of the ideas in the text. Thus, it is very likely to obtain better results from the writing studies to be done alongside the mentioned studies.

We put forward the following proposals in the light of the findings of this study:

In Turkish courses, education should include reading comprehension strategies to help students achieve lifelong literacy. Also, we must help students use these strategies. We must tell students that in order for them to increase their success in writing, they should read effectively. Teachers should observe whether the students use reading comprehension strategies or not. In primary education, more studies should be done to understand if there is a correlation between writing achievement and the use of reading comprehension strategies.

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