

## *Full Length Research Paper*

# **Analysis of writing anxiety of secondary school students according to several variables**

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The aim of this study was to determine the effect of the writing anxiety that is one of the factors affecting the written expression skills of secondary school students according to several variables. Population of the study consisted of students studying in the 6th, 7th and 8th grade of secondary schools in Canakkale in the academic year of 2011 to 2012. Likert type "The Scale of Writing Anxiety" developed by Yaman (2010) was conducted to 1060 students selected randomly. Regarding the data analysis of total scores according to the variables of gender and the state of whether keeping a diary or not, statistics of *t*-test was accounted and significant level of 0.05 was taken as criterion. For the analysis of total scores of aspects related to grade level of students, their states of loving Turkish lesson, readability of handwriting and number of books read in a month, the statistics of one-way variance analysis - ANOVA *F*-test and Scheffe test to determine between which scores there is a significance were accounted. As a result of the research, it was found that anxiety levels of the students were low. Gender, grade level, keeping a diary or not, loving Turkish lesson or not, number of books read in a month and state of expression their handwriting as readable and nice are the important factors affecting anxiety levels of the students.

**Key words:** Anxiety, writing anxiety, anxiety level, writing education.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Writing is indisputably one of the four basic skills of language teaching. Writing is a complex language skill that requires versatile and entwined sub-skills (Tiryaki, 2011: 7). Writing compared to other language skills develops more slowly and requires a longer process (Demirel, 2003). On the other hand, it is the most difficult language skill which students have difficulty. Writing is also the most unsuccessful skill in Turkish education. Related researches in the literature show that we are not able to gain desired skills about writing education sufficiently to students. "Not at the elementary and high schools, even most of the young graduates from university cannot express their feelings, thoughts and ideas clearly. They cannot use their native language correctly." (Ozdemir, 1983: 19). According to Maltepe (2006: 58), this situation caused by psychological, grammatical or cognitive problems experienced in the writing process. Perception the individual developed about writing and negative thoughts towards writing can affect writing education as well. "negative reaction

developed against writing and thus anxiety and shyness result in preventing students from expressing their feelings and thoughts in written form or various problems about writing" (Zorbaz, 2010: 17). Most of the studies related to language acquisition and affirmative status focused on anxiety phenomenon which takes a critical role on language acquisition (Akpur, 2005). "Any writing experience from writing a letter simply to writing a complex report cause writing anxiety among students" (Yaman, 2010: 273). "Writing anxiety is related to writing desire or trend of avoiding writing of individuals." (Tiryaki, 2011: 37).

"Writing anxiety can affect individuals' writing skills in all levels and cause avoiding writing for individuals. As this occurs once, that is, individual starts to avoid writing, there is no more opportunity necessary to determine writing anxiety of the individual and develop his/her writing skills" (Zorbaz, 2010: 18).

According to related research results, fear of negatively criticized, feeling themselves inadequate about writing

skills and negative attitudes of teachers cause writing anxiety for students (Ozturk and Cecen, 2007: 220; Yaman, 2010: 273). Writing anxiety sometimes may be resulted from students' oversensitivity. Oner and Gedikoglu (2007: 68) stated that the reason for people having difficulty to write due to their language anxiety is that individuals are excited while writing since they feel obligation to be dependent upon definite rules about good writing strictly.

Effects of anxiety change according to various variables such as ability, gender, status and interests. According to Akpur (2005: 69), "As anxiety for highly talented (skilled) students take place as a 'facilitator', it causes low performance and even failure for students with low or medium level of ability (skill)". Batumlu and Erdenyildiz (2007: 25) asserted that there are facilitator and prohibitive anxieties. Facilitator anxiety affects learning in a positive way as prohibitive anxiety affects learning in a negative way (Yaman, 2010: 272).

Effects of anxiety on academic achievement have being researched by educational scientists and psychologists. Especially studies related to reasons of anxiety, types of anxiety and anxiety scale development have being conducted. In Turkey, related studies firstly focused more on second language learning anxiety as a foreign language. In this sense, researches regarding this topic are required since researches conducted about writing anxiety for native language are limited and writing skills have important role on active usage of language by individuals.

The research hypothesis is that writing anxiety affects the writing skills of individuals. Accordingly, it is thought that the level of writing anxiety of students is worth to be researched and asked whether these variables make difference on the writing anxiety levels of the students. Within this context, Null hypothesizes ( $H_0$ ) of the research are as in the following:

$H_1$ : Students have writing anxiety.

$H_2$ : Writing anxiety levels of students differ according to various variables.

Having acceptance or reject of the Null hypothesis according to findings of the research, the alternative hypothesis ( $H_1$ ) will be accepted.

### Purpose and sub-purposes

The aim of this study is to determine writing anxiety of the students while they are performing their writing skills. Within this framework, the following research questions were addressed:

1. What is the level of writing anxiety of students?
2. Is there any significant difference for the writing anxiety levels of the students according to the variables of

- a. Gender,
- b. Grade,

- c. Keeping a diary or not,
- d. Loving Turkish lesson or not,
- e. Number of books read in a month,
- f. Expressing whether their handwritings as nice and readable or not?

### METHODOLOGY

The study has a descriptive survey model. Survey studies has aim to determine the certain characteristics of a group. In survey model, individual or object mentioned in a study is defined as it is in its own conditions (Karasar, 2009). Therefore, since the research measured writing anxiety of the secondary school students according to several variables, it is relational survey model from quantitative research patterns.

### Sampling

Population of the research is composed of secondary school students in elementary schools studying in the centre of Canakkale province in the academic year of 2011 to 2012. Sample of the research was selected by randomly sampling method. The sample is composed of 1061 students studying at the six schools in city centre named as Onsekiz Mart, Merkez, Barbaros, Ozlem Kayali, Mustafa Kemal, and Vali Fahrettin Akkutlu.

52.2% of sample of the study consists of females and 47.8% of males. 33.6% of students were in 6th grade level, 31.8% of them are in 7th grade level and 34.7% of them are in 8th grade level (Table 1).

### Data collection

The data collection tool developed by Yaman (2010), analyzed for the validity and reliability and consisting of 19 items was used. However, since reliability is required to be reanalyzed to conduct on different samples, reliability analysis was made again by the researcher. As a result of reliability analysis, Cronbach Alpha value was found as 0.657 and thus it was found that the data collection tool is reliable. The data collection tool composes of Likert-type scale with five-point such as 1-Never, 2-Rarely, 3-Sometimes, 4-Usually, and 5-Always. Since five-point scale changing from the participating level to not participating level for the survey items and this five-point scale is composed of four equal intervals, the coefficient was found as  $4/5=0.80$  and it was sued to determine the real intervals of scale points (1-1.79 for never, 1.80-2.59 for rarely, 2.60-3.39 for sometimes, 3.40-4.19 for usually, and 4.20-5.00 for always). Information related to gender, class, school of the students and some questions regarding independent variables were asked in the "Personal Information Form".

### Data analysis

Data obtained at the end of the survey conducted to secondary school students were analyzed were analyzed by means of SPSS 15.0 package statistics program. The data were presented in detail as tables. While inferring the results, for the variables of gender and the state of whether keeping a diary or not, statistics of t-test was accounted and significant level of 0.05 was taken as criterion. For the analysis of total scores of aspects related to grade level of students, their states of loving Turkish lesson, readability of handwriting and number of books read in a month, the statistics of one-way variance analysis (Anova-F test) and Scheffe test to determine between which scores there is a significance were

Table 1. Descriptive statistics.

Independent variable	Student		
	n	%	
Gender	Female	554	52.2
	Male	507	47.8
	Total	1061	100.0
School	Onsekiz Mart	211	19.9
	Merkez	155	14.6
	Barbaros	192	18.1
	Ozlem Kayali	143	13.5
	Mustafa Kemal	221	20.8
	Vali Fahrettin	139	13.1
	Total	1061	100.0
Class	6th Grade	356	33.6
	7th Grade	337	31.8
	8th Grade	368	34.7
	Total	1061	100.0

accounted.

## FINDINGS

In this part of the study, results of statistical analysis according to sub-purposes were stated and inferred.

Table 2 shows the distribution of students' answers to "Writing Anxiety Scale". Most of the students (81%) are afraid of not being understood regarding their writings. More than half of the students (69%) think that their writings are appreciated. Similarly, it was determined that 65% of the students attend to composition lesson interestedly. Almost  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the students (74%) declared that they did not avoid writing due to critics about their writings. 75% of the students answered positively for the item "I do not want to write due to my bad handwriting.". in addition, most of the students (78%) stated that they express themselves by writing. Likewise, 73% of the students do not have difficulty to provide paper organization while writing a composition. More than half of the students (63%) do not feel anxiety to be approved while writing.

Almost all of the students (91%) stated "I can easily write about a given topic". most of the students (86%) think that they are appreciated about their writings by their families. More than half of the students (65%) are interested in composition lessons.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the students think that they have enough information about event-based written expression types such as story, novel, theater, etc. more than half of the students (71%) like writing. In addition, most of the students (79%) declared that writing would make contribution for their development and 73% of them think that writing is a funny activity.

Slightly more than half of the students (60%) have thought that writing would relax them, almost half of them (46%) think as the opposite. In addition, while half of the students (55%) stated that their teachers encourage them to write, approximately half of them (43%) said that they did not.

According to the results, it can be said that students have rather high self-esteem about writing. It can be concluded that students have positive thoughts about writing and they believe that they can write easily about a given topic. In addition, students are not afraid about not being understood for their writings, not avoiding critics about their writings, and find their handwritings as nice. On the other hand, it can be asserted that almost half of the students feel writing anxiety, writing does not relax them and teachers do not encourage students sufficiently. Teachers should encourage their students more about writing, direct them to write and especially evaluate their writings.

As seen from Table 3, there is a significant difference for the points of students got from "Writing Anxiety Scale" according to gender variable [ $t_{(1059)}=2.7227$ ,  $P<0.05$ ]. Writing anxiety points of female students ( $\bar{X}=2.82$ ) are higher than male students points ( $\bar{X}=2.74$ ). Therefore, it can be said that female students feel more writing anxiety compared to male students.

According to Table 4, there is a significant difference for the points of students got from "Writing Anxiety Scale" according to grade level variable [ $t_{(2-1058)}=6.795$ ,  $P<0.05$ ]. In other words, writing anxiety levels of the students change significantly according to their grade levels. With respect to the results of Scheffe test done in order to determine between which groups there is significant difference for grade levels, average points of the students are seen as ( $=2.8587$ ) for 6th grade level, ( $=2.7543$ ) for 7th grade, and ( $=2.7387$ ) for 8th grade. In terms of this result, it is seen that 6th grade level students feel more writing anxiety compared to 7th and 8th grade students. In a sense, it has been stated that writing anxiety of the students decrease when their grade levels increase. As seen in Table 5, there is a significant difference for the points of students got from "Writing Anxiety Scale" according to whether students keep a diary or not [ $t_{(1059)}=7.820$ ,  $P<0.05$ ]. Writing anxiety levels of students keeping a diary ( $\bar{X}=2.94$ ) are higher than points of the students not keeping a diary ( $\bar{X}=2.70$ ). According to the findings, it has been reached that students keeping a diary feel more writing anxiety compared to the others do not.

According to Table 6, there is a significant difference for the points of students got from "Writing Anxiety Scale" according to whether students love Turkish lesson or not [ $t_{(3-1057)}=25.154$ ,  $P<0.05$ ]. In other words, students' loving Turkish lesson changes significantly. With respect to the results of Scheffe test done in order to determine between which groups there is significance for students' loving Turkish lesson, points of the students expressing that they love much Turkish lesson

**Table 2.** View of students related to writing anxiety.

No	Item	Never		Rarely		Sometimes		Generally		Always		x	Ss
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1	I am afraid my writings will not be understood.	499	47	363	34	93	8.8	60	5.7	46	4.3	1.86	1.70
2	My writings are not appreciated.	439	41	306	28.8	170	16.0	81	7.6	65	6.1	2.08	1.19
3	Writing makes relax me.	147	13.9	253	23.8	187	17.6	222	20.9	252	23.8	3.16	1.38
4	I am interested in composition lessons.	131	12.3	223	21.0	217	20.5	186	17.5	304	28.7	3.29	1.39
5	I participate in composition and poem competitions.	407	38.4	296	27.9	181	17.1	84	7.9	93	8.8	2.20	1.27
6	I have enough information related to types of event-based written expression such as story, novel, theater. etc.	52	4.9	174	16.4	287	27.0	261	24.6	287	27.0	3.52	1.18
7	I have difficulty to form drafts (intro. body. and conclusion parts) to write a composition.	523	49.3	289	27.2	127	12.0	59	5.6	63	5.9	1.91	1.16
8	I can write easily about a given subject.	37	3.5	153	14.4	150	14.1	287	27.0	434	40.9	3.87	1.19
9	My writings are appreciated by my parents.	42	4.0	101	9.51	102	9.6	268	25.3	548	51.6	4.11	1.15
10	My teacher encourages me about my writings.	253	23.8	213	20.1	196	18.5	160	15.1	239	22.5	2.92	1.48
11	I like writing.	116	10.9	183	17.2	214	20.2	208	19.6	340	32.0	3.44	1.37
12	I avoid writing due to the critics about my writings.	562	53.0	231	21.8	141	13.3	78	7.4	49	4.6	1.88	1.16
13	I do not want to write since my handwriting is not nice..	676	63.7	135	12.7	112	10.6	50	4.7	88	8.3	1.81	1.28
14	I have difficulty to express myself by writing.	623	58.7	213	20.1	125	11.8	53	5.0	47	4.4	1.76	1.11
15	I have sufficient information about the types of idea-based written expressions such as article, essay and review. etc.	105	9.9	169	15.9	313	29.5	216	20.4	258	24.3	3.33	1.27
16	I have difficulty to provide paper organization while writing a composition.	517	48.7	265	25.0	132	12.4	88	8.3	59	5.6	1.96	1.20
17	I feel anxiety of being approved while writing.	368	34.7	308	29.0	163	15.4	109	10.3	113	10.7	2.33	1.32
18	I believe that writing makes contribution to my development.	81	7.6	129	12.2	146	13.8	159	15.0	546	51.5	3.90	1.34
19	I think writing is a funny activity.	149	14.0	172	16.2	158	14.9	181	17.1	401	37.8	3.48	1.47

( $\bar{X}$  = 2.8857) are higher than points of the ones expressing as they love Turkish lesson a little ( $\bar{X}$  = 2.6340). This finding showed that loving Turkish lesson makes a positive contribution for

students' writing anxiety.

As seen in Table 7, there is a significant difference for the points of students got from "Writing Anxiety Scale" according to the number of books students read in a month [ $t_{(3-1057)} =$

14.912,  $P < 0.05$ ]. That is, writing anxiety of the students change with the number of books they read in a month. With respect to the results of Scheffe test done in order to determine between which groups there is significance for the number

**Table 3.** t-test results of scale of writing anxiety scores of the students according to gender variable.

Gender	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	Sd	t	p
Female	554	2.82	0.47	1059	2.7227	0.006*
Male	507	2.74	0.48			

\*Significance level is  $P < 0.05$ .

**Table 4.** One-way variance analysis (ANOVA) results related to scale of writing anxiety scores of the students according to grade level variable.

Variance source	Squares sum	sd	Squares average	F	p*	Significant difference* (Scheffe)
Between groups	3.036	2	1.518	6.795	0.001*	1-2 ile 1-3
Within groups	236.377	1058	0.223			
Total	239.413	1060				

\*Significance level is  $P < 0.05$ ; 1=6th grade; 2=7th grade; 3=8th grade.

**Table 5.** T-test results of scale of writing anxiety scores of the students according to keeping a diary or not.

Keeping a diary	N	$\bar{X}$	Ss	Sd	t	P
Yes	344	2.94	0.47	1059	7.820	0.006*
No	717	2.70	0.45			

\*Significance level is  $P < 0.05$ .

**Table 6.** One-way variance analysis (ANOVA) results related to scale of writing anxiety scores of the students according to the variable of loving Turkish lesson or not.

Variance source	Squares sum	sd	Squares average	F	p*	Significant difference* (Tukey)
Between groups	15.953	3	5.318	25.154	0.000*	1-2
Within groups	223.460	1057	0.211			
Total	239.413	1060				

\*Significance level is  $P < 0.05$ ; 1=love much; 2=love a little; 3=not love; 4=never love.

**Table 7.** One-way variance analysis (ANOVA) results related to scale of writing anxiety scores of the students according to the variable of number of books read in a month.

Variance source	Squares sum	sd	Squares average	F	P*	Significant difference* (Scheffe)
Between groups	9.722	3	3.241	14.912	0.000*	Never and 4-5
Within groups	229.692	1057	0.217			
Total	239.413	1060				

\*Significance level is  $P < 0.05$ ; 1=1-2; 2=3-4; 3=4-5; 4=Never.

books students read, it was found that there is a significant difference for points of the students never read a book ( $\bar{X} = 2.58$ ), students read 1 to 2 books ( $\bar{X} = 2.68$ ),

students read 3 to 4 books ( $\bar{X} = 2.7700$ ) with students read 4 to 5 books ( $\bar{X} = 2.90$ ). With respect to this finding, it can be said that while the number of books students

**Table 8.** One-way variance analysis (ANOVA) results related to scale of writing anxiety scores of the students according to the variable of handwriting.

Variance source	Squares sum	sd	Squares average	F	P*	Significant difference* (Scheffe)
Between groups	2.647	2	1.323			
Within groups	236.766	1058	0.224	5.914	0.003	1-3
Total	239.413	1060				

\*Significance level is  $P < 0.05$ ; 1=Yes, it is very nice and readable; 2=It's quite nice and readable; 3=No, it is not nice and readable.

read in a month increase, their writing anxiety levels decrease. As a result, reading book has effect on writing anxiety.

According to Table 8, there is a significant difference for the points of students got from "Writing Anxiety Scale" according to students' perceptions as nice and readable for their handwritings [ $t_{(2-1058)} = 5.914$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ]. That is, writing anxiety change significantly with students' perceptions as nice and readable for their handwritings. With respect to the results of Scheffe test done in order to determine between which groups there is significance whether students find their handwritings as nice and readable, it is seen that the students expressing about their handwriting as "Yes, it is very nice and readable" ( $\bar{X} = 2.8379$ ) state more positive views compared to the ones expressing about their handwriting as "No, it is not nice and readable".

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this research conducted to determine the states of secondary school students related to writing anxiety, the following result have been reached:

An important part of secondary school students have writing anxiety. It was determined that very few students have high level of writing anxiety. Similar results had been reached in some researches. Zorbaz (2010) stated that important part of secondary school students have low level of writing anxiety in his study. Besides, Yaman (2010) resulted that students have medium level of writing anxiety.

According to the research results, it has been seen that self-confidence levels of the students about writing are rather high. Students have positive attitude about writing and think that they can write about any topic easily. In addition, students are not afraid about not being understood for their writings, not avoiding critics about their writings, and find their handwritings as nice. This is a desired situation that students have positive views about writing and like it. It can be thought that, families, schools, teachers and environment have positive effects on this situation.

The research findings also showed that there is a significant difference between genders for writing anxiety.

It is determined that female students feel more writing anxiety than male students. It can be said that female students act more responsibly and do not want to make mistake. Similarly, Ucgun (2011) reached the same result in his study. In addition, Zorbaz (2010) stated that there is a significant difference for writing anxiety in favor of males with respect to gender. Daly also resulted in his research that female students feel lower writing anxiety compared to male students (Zorbaz, 2010: 195). He asserted its reason that female students get positive reactions and rewards from their teachers. In other researches, no significant difference was found between genders for writing anxiety (Yaman, 2010; Tiryaki, 2011).

The research results showed that there is a significant difference between writing anxiety and students' grade level. It has been seen that 6th grade students have more writing anxiety compared to 8th grade students. Similarly, Yaman (2010) also reached the same finding in his research. Opposite to these results, Zorbaz (2010) found in the research that 8th grade students have more writing anxiety than 6th grade students have.

As a result of the research, it was stated that the students keeping a diary have more writing anxiety compared to the students that did not. This finding can be evaluated from the point of view that students keeping a diary are attentive to writing and feel more writing anxiety since they avoid making a mistake. Similarly, Ucgun (2011) also stated in the study that students keeping a diary have more writing anxiety compared to the others not keeping a diary. On the other hand, Zorbaz (2010) asserted that students keeping a diary feel less anxiety than the ones do not. In accordance with this, whereas keeping a diary increase writing anxiety for some students, it is a decreasing factor for some other students.

According to the research results, it has been determined that students loving Turkish lesson feel more writing anxiety than the students not loving. Since loving the lesson requires taking care and not making mistakes, this situation can create anxiety for students. Yaman (2010) states in his research that students not loving Turkish lesson have more writing anxiety compared to the ones that does it. This result conflicts with our research result.

Results of the research showed that students read much feel more writing anxiety compared to the students read never or read less. Similarly, a research done before

by Yaman (2010) stated that students never read books feel more writing anxiety compared to the students read 3 to 4 books in a month. Uçgun (2011) resulted in his research that the more students read books, the less they feel writing anxiety. Therefore, it can be said that number of books read in a month has effect on writing anxiety. Whereas number of books read decreases anxiety for some students, it increases for some students.

It has been stated that students finding their hand writings nice and readable feel more writing anxiety compared to the students that find not. This situation can be explained that students sentimentalize due to consciousness about the rules of Turkish language.

In conclusion, it has been seen that secondary school students in elementary schools have not much writing anxiety. Anxiety of the students caused by their over sensitivity. Daly stated that the reason for people having difficulty to write due to their language anxiety is that individuals are excited while writing since they feel obligation to be dependent upon definite rules about good writing strictly (Oner and Gedikoglu, 2007: 68). This kind of anxiety has also seen for the students within the context of research sample. Since, while approximately all of the students in the research sample (91%) said that they could easily write about a given topic, most of them (79%) said that writing would make contribution for their development and 73% of them stated that writing was a funny activity. Confidence students have about writing and their beliefs regarding writing will improve them selves caused even a little anxiety. Low level of anxiety will affect students in a positive way. According to Yaman (2010: 273), low level of anxiety and motivation enable authors to increase self-efficacy level. "Students having low level of writing anxiety have a positive attitude towards writing; trust themselves about writing and like writing studies" (Zorbaz, 2010: 19). Tekindal (2009) stated that low level of anxiety can be motivating as well.

According to the results of the research, families of the students in the sample appreciate their writings. Therefore, it can be thought that there is no concern about not being approved for students that affects their written expression in a negative way. In addition, it can be said that teachers do not encourage students sufficiently about writing. However, it should be one of the most important tasks of Turkish lesson teachers to direct and encourage their students about writing. Writing education should be given in collaboration with school and teacher and also parents and environment and students should be supported about this issue.

It can also be suggested that similar researches in order to determine writing anxiety of students in different

socio-cultural regions of Turkey are conducted and their results are discussed.

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