

The mediating role of writing attitude in the relationship between secondary school students' attitudes towards Turkish course and reading attitudes

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ABSTRACT

Students' attitudes towards Turkish course along with their reading attitudes constitute a significant variable that affects their entire life. This study aims to develop a model about secondary school students' attitudes towards Turkish course which is effective in their academic achievement. It is hypothesized in the study that the attitude towards Turkish course increases in students with positive reading attitudes with the mediation of their increased writing attitudes. The participants of the study consisted of 394 5th, 6th and 7th grade students (199 females and 195 males). The data was gathered through the Scale for attitude towards Turkish Course, Reading Attitude Scale, and Writing Attitude Scale. The findings revealed significant positive relationships between all the variables that were analyzed. The findings obtained from the mediation analysis have shown that writing attitude partially mediates the relationship between the attitude towards Turkish course and reading attitude. The findings of the research have been discussed in the context of the literature and recommendations for further studies have been made.

Keywords: Reading attitude, writing attitude, Turkish course, secondary school students.

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INTRODUCTION

Language is the primary medium of communication for individuals to understand themselves, to communicate themselves to others and socialize. Today, in the age of information and communication, it is the most fundamental tool for accessing information; and a country that does not value language teaching can be considered as closing its doors to the future. Developments in manufacturing, agriculture or health are simply not enough for the growth of a nation. In order for progress to take place, it is important to raise people with a sophisticated language and mind (Güneş, 2014). For this reason, societies should give priority to native language education.

Language courses are among the building blocks for raising academically successful people who can contribute to the development of their countries. There are various factors depending on the students (Akyol et al., 2010; Purdue and Hattie, 1999; Sharma and Sharma, 2018); on the families (Boonk et al., 2018); and on the

environment (Merkine et al., 2019; Saminathen et al., 2020; Xu and Qi, 2019). One of the factors among the variables depending both on the students and the environment that affect their academic achievement is language skills; and in this regard, language courses (Grisso, 2018; Kastner et al., 2001). Language skills along with student's achievement in this field are important in terms of student's academic success as they influence the other courses as well. Some studies in the literature (Acıyan, 2008; Baştug, 2014; Chege, 2012; Yıldız, 2013) show that language skills are related to and sometimes even predict overall academic success. Besides overall academic success, students' success in verbal courses (Hijazi, 2018; Menaka and Jebaraj, 2017), as well as in numerical courses (Grimm, 2008; Lerkkanen et al., 2005; Reed et al., 2016; Stoffelsma and Spoorren, 2019) is related to their achievement in language skills. In this respect, language skills and language courses are important in terms of individuals' academic success

which influences entire life. Apart from providing the students with communication and social skills, language courses are significant in achieving academic success and thus, crucial in the development of the country.

In Turkey, to achieve the educational objectives at secondary school level, the educational activity, in which the fundamental courses such as Turkish, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies constitute the majority, and is carried out for 30 h per week. The objectives of secondary education are expected to be achieved when the particular objectives of each course is met. Among these courses, Turkish has a significant place as it is the official language of the country, and a means of communication for other courses (Gelbal, 2010). Both in primary and secondary schools in Turkey, the time allocated for Turkish course is more compared to other courses. For instance, weekly course hours in secondary school are 29 h; and Turkish course for the 5th and the 6th grades are 6 h, and for the 7th and 8th grades are 5 h. The time allocated for courses such as Mathematics, Science and Social Studies is less. This shows how much importance is attached to this course in Turkey. In addition to this, in the curricula for all courses, the first item under the title of competencies is related to Turkish. For example, the first item under competencies title in the Mathematics Course Curriculum (2019) is "Communication in the mother tongue." This item is stated as "expressing and interpreting concepts, thoughts, opinions, feelings and facts both orally and in writing (listening, speaking, reading, and writing); interacting linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in all kinds of societal and cultural contexts, such as education and training, work, home and leisure." Apparently, the first competence expected from students is their communicating in the mother tongue, that is, in Turkish. Moreover, in the Turkish Course Curriculum (2019), it is indicated that the program aims to enable students "to acquire language skills related to listening/watching, speaking, reading, and writing along with cognitive skills which they will use lifelong; to use these skills to improve themselves individually and socially, to communicate effectively and to acquire the habits of reading and writing willingly with the love of Turkish language." Accordingly, it is aimed that Turkish courses will help students improve language skills and competencies, learn in all other areas, develop personally and socially and acquire professional skills.

There are four basic language skills that influence the individual's achievement in all language courses in general, and in particular, in Turkish courses which constitute the ground for this research. These are listening, speaking, reading and writing. Reading and writing skills are the last two language skills the student acquires with the schooling process, and constitute the backbone of Turkish courses. Students' academic achievement in Turkish courses is closely related to these sub-areas of language skills as well. There are

several studies that deal with the relationship between the achievement in Turkish courses and these language skills. Güngör (2009) reported that as the 5th grade students' academic achievement in Turkish courses increased, the number of books they read increased. Further, Kaleağası (2009) identified a significant high level relationship in the positive direction between the 4th and 5th grade students' writing skills and their academic achievement in Turkish courses. In another research conducted by Akın (2016) involving secondary school students who also constitute the target group of the current study, the relationship between their writing attitudes, reading habits, and academic achievement in Turkish course was revealed. As a result of the study, Akın (2016) found evidence of a significant positive relationship between the students' academic success grades for Turkish course and their reading habits. These findings point out a possible relationship between the academic achievement in Turkish course, and reading and writing; they show that Turkish courses can be influenced by these two basic language skills.

Reading and writing skills which constitute the backbone of Turkish courses are complex and multidimensional actions that have cognitive, physical, environmental and affective dimensions. In terms of reading, this skill is a complex process consisting of seeing, perceiving, vocalizing, comprehending and constructing in the brain (Güneş, 2014). Reading is a complex organization of patterns of higher mental processes and embraces all types of thinking, evaluating, judging, imagining, reasoning, and problem solving (Gates, 1949). For a student to be successful in reading, it is necessary to understand the genre and the type of the text by skimming and scanning; set a reading goal; make predictions about the text using prior knowledge; review the text if not understood by using helpful strategies (asking for help from the teacher or peers, rereading the text, etc.); and evaluate the text after reading (Akyol, 2008). In this sense, reading is a goal-oriented, strategic metacognitive process that requires the readers to monitor and manage their own process (Blachowicz and Ogle, 2008). When it comes to writing skill, it is putting down on paper the knowledge acquired in different ways such as observing, reading, or thinking and constructed in the mind of the individual. In this process, the individual writes down the knowledge constructed through mental processes (Güneş, 2014).

Writing is a highly complex problem-solving process that is related to the writer's memory and involves planning, transforming into text, and reviewing. During this process, the writer uses many cognitive strategies such as defining the writing task; setting goals for this task; identifying the readers; activating the knowledge related to the content of the text and the discourse features and stored in the long-term memory; producing opinions about the content of the text and making choices; transforming the choices into a text; reviewing

by comparing what is written with the goals (Bruning et al., 2011; Flower and Hayes, 1981; Harris and Graham, 2009). In all sub-skills of reading and writing in general, and of the Turkish course in particular, cognitive, metacognitive and environmental factors are effective.

Apart from these factors, language courses and language skills are closely related to affective variables such as self-efficacy perception, goal orientation, and attitude (Graham et al., 2007; Kirchner and Mostert, 2017). Individuals' confidence in their literacy competencies, their responses to language skills, and the meanings and values they attach to these skills are cognitive factors that affect their reading and writing motivation and their success (Vaknin-Nusbaum et al., 2020). The concept of attitude which is among these cognitive variables has become a significant concept not only in psychology but also in the field of education. Although it is a critical term, in the literature, there are differences in the definition of the concept of attitude just as in the definitions of many affective concepts. As emphasized by Ekholm et al. (2018), there is a surprisingly little agreement among the researchers on what attitude is. Nevertheless, according to one of the most common definitions in the literature, attitude is "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975: 6 qtd. in Graham et al., 2007).

Additionally, after reviewing Fishbein and Ajzen's definition of attitude, McKenna et al. (2012) defined reading attitude as "acquired predispositions to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to aspects of reading." With reference to this definition, the thought of acquiring predisposition for anything shows that attitude is the result of many experiences that are gone through in time. Person's attitude can be characterized at a point from negative to positive, and a person's later experiences can change this point. For this reason, attitude may not be constant or permanent and may change (Lupo et al., 2017). From this point of view, reading and writing attitude can be defined as "an emotional tendency that involves how the act of reading and writing makes the writer feel from happiness to sadness" (Graham et al., 2007: 518). Thus, the attitude towards Turkish course can be defined as an emotional tendency that involves how the student feels from happiness to sadness about this course.

Student's attitude towards a course or a field can make the student successful in that course or field. In the general sense, in terms of language courses, there is a positive relationship between the academic achievement in language courses and the attitude towards language courses (Chambers, 1999; Şahin and Yasar, 2010). A similar situation is also relevant in terms of Turkish course. Researches have shown that the attitude towards Turkish course differs according to academic achievement, and that there is a significant relationship

between the attitude towards Turkish course and academic achievement (Ateş, 2008; Karasakaloğlu and Saracaloğlu, 2009; Şahin, 2011; Yetim, 2006; Zeybek and Kurbanoglu, 2012). Particularly in terms of reading skills, while no relationship was found between reading attitude and reading achievement in a small number of studies (e.g. Mustachio, 1990), there are many studies that revealed a positive relationship (Baker and Wigfield, 1999; Boz and Ulusoy, 2020; Deveci, 2019; Kovacıoğlu, 2006; Martinez et al., 2008; McKenna et al., 1995; Ökcü, 2019; Ünal, 2006).

On the other hand, in terms of writing, Knudson (1995) and Graham et al. (2012) have found out in their researches that writing attitude is effective in predicting writing skills, and that people with writing attitude tend to be better writers. Similarly, in their study which analyzed the structural relationship between writing achievement and writing attitude, Graham et al. (2007) determined that there is a unidirectional relationship between writing attitude and writing achievement, and that writing attitude affects writing achievement. Moreover, in a research on 4th grade students, Bulut (2017) affirmed that writing attitude influences writing achievement positively. These researches demonstrate that attitude is one of the variables that affect academic achievement in one course in general and in specific areas in particular, and reveal how important attitudes are, especially in the Turkish course and in the two basic skills that constitute it.

It is possible that the relationship of attitude with motivation and self-efficacy underlies the effect of attitudes in academic achievement. In terms of the variables of this research, if students like Turkish course, their self-efficacy perception concerning Turkish course can increase, and they can put more effort in the subject; and this situation can affect their performance and academic achievement positively. Hence, there are studies showing that the attitude towards Turkish course is also related to motivation (Erdem and Gözüküçük, 2013; Fidan and Eren, 2017). Likewise, Ünlü (2014) has revealed positive significance between students' self-efficacy perception and their attitudes towards Turkish course, and found out that their attitudes towards Turkish course develop as their academic, social and emotional self-efficacy levels increase. The situation is similar in reading and writing because individuals who have positive feelings about reading and writing can feel efficient in reading/writing; and thus, their effort in the process of reading/writing can increase and they can be successful in these areas. On the other hand, individuals who have negative feelings for reading and writing can feel inadequate in reading/writing; can be reluctant towards reading and writing; can put no effort in the process of reading and writing; and cannot be successful in these areas. Several studies in the literature concerning motivation and particularly self-efficacy perception both in reading (Baki, 2018; Eyüp and Uzuner Yurt, 2016; Şahin, 2019) and in writing (Mazeh

and Moukarzel, 2018) support this assumption, and indicate the positive relationship between attitude and motivation.

Reading and writing attitude can affect not only the reading and writing skills but the attitude towards Turkish courses as well. The fundamental objective of Turkish courses is to develop students' listening/watching, speaking, reading and writing skills through the competencies and activities indicated in the Turkish Course Curriculum (2019), and make them use the Turkish language accurately, effectively, and willingly being aware of the opportunities and richness of the Turkish language. The content of Turkish course that aims to make students like and improve their mother tongue, again, largely affects their thoughts, feelings, behaviors, especially, their attitudes towards this course (Deniz and Tuna, 2006). The two basic language skills, reading and writing, constitute this content. Students' attitudes towards these two skills can also affect their attitudes towards Turkish course. When the relationship between academic achievement in Turkish course and sub-skills (Akın, 2016; Güngör, 2009; Kelağası, 2009) is taken into consideration, the attitude towards Turkish course, besides the aforementioned variables, can be related to the basic skills that constitute this course. There are researches in the literature that examine the relationship between the attitude towards Turkish course and reading and writing skills (Aktay, 2019; Ateş, 2008; Dursun, 2018). Although limited in number, these researches point out a possible relationship between the attitude towards Turkish course and reading and writing attitudes.

Apart from these findings, the relationship between reading and writing has also been underlined for many years. The researches in the literature focus on reading and writing in general, and on the relationship between reading and writing attitudes in particular. In terms of the relationship between reading skills and writing skills, there are many researches that examine the relationship between reading and writing (Abbott and Berninger, 1993; Berninger et al., 2002; Carrell and Connor, 1991; Carson et al., 1990; Eminoğlu and Özer Özkan, 2019; Eroğlu, 2013; Heck and Creslip, 2001; Ivy, 2019; Koons, 2008; Shanahan, 1984; Shanahan and Lomax, 1986; Wong, 2018). These researches focus on the strong relationship between reading and writing, and suggest that there may be a relationship between these skills and attitudes. In terms of the relationship between reading attitude and writing, there are a few studies that identify the relationship between these variables (Akkaya and İşçi, 2018; Eroğlu, 2013; Lestari and Holandyah, 2016). For instance, Eroğlu (2013) determined a relationship between university students' reading habit attitudes and writing skills. Akkaya and İşçi (2018) revealed a low level significant relationship in the positive direction between university students' reading attitudes and their achievement in writing classes. When reading attitude

and writing attitude which are the basic variables of the present research are taken into consideration, it is possible to observe a similar situation (Baş and Şahin, 2012; Günlü and Oral, 2018; Sallabaş, 2008; Ünal and İşeri, 2012; Yıldız and Kaman, 2016).

Consequently, taking the theoretical framework into account, this study aims to analyze the relationships between the attitude towards Turkish course, reading attitude, and writing attitude, and determine whether writing attitude has a mediating role between the attitude towards Turkish course and reading attitude. In accordance with the purpose of the study, the hypotheses of the study are as follows:

1. There is a significant positive relationship between the variables of secondary school students' attitudes towards Turkish course, reading attitudes and writing attitudes;
2. Writing attitude has a significant mediating role in the relationship between secondary school students' attitudes towards Turkish course and reading attitudes.

In the related literature review, it has been observed that previous researches have tried to indicate the kind of relationship these variables have with socio-demographic variables such as grade level, age and gender (Akkaya and Özdemir, 2013; Bağcı, 2010; Black, 2006; Can et al., 2016; Cin Şeker, 2019; Deniz and Tuna, 2006; Hood, 2015; Karasakaloğlu and Saracaloğlu, 2009; Kaya et al., 2009; Kuşdemir, 2019; McKenna et al., 1995; Sainsbury and Schagen, 2004; Sallabaş, 2008; Smith et al., 2012; Şahin, 2019; Ünal, 2010; Yıldız and Kaman, 2016; Zeybek and Kurbanoglu, 2012; Zorbaz and Habeş, 2015). Some of the researches focus on the relationships between the attitude towards Turkish course and achievement in reading-writing (Aktay, 2019; Ateş, 2008; Dursun, 2018) and others focus on the relationships between reading attitude and writing attitude (Baş and Şahin, 2012; Sallabaş, 2008; Yıldız and Kaman, 2016). In the literature, no research has been found which analyzes the relationships between the attitude towards Turkish course, reading attitude and writing attitude.

However, there is a relationship between reading and writing skills, particularly reading, and the attitude towards Turkish course; and a relationship also exist between these skills. When these relationships are taken into consideration, writing attitude can be thought to be mediating the relationship between the attitude towards Turkish course and reading attitude. The present research tests the validity of this hypothesis. Revealing the relationships between these three variables through the findings obtained in the study, it is aimed to provide an insight for the teachers and researchers in the field, and contribute to students' achievement in Turkish courses. With the help of this study, preventive interventions can be implemented to reduce students' possible negative attitudes towards writing and increase their attitudes towards Turkish course.

METHODOLOGY

Research model

The research model was analyzed according to the mediator variable conditions set forth by Baron and Kenny (1986). The conditions for a variable to be a mediator variable, as proposed by Baron and Kenny, are given below. For a variable to be a mediator variable, the following conditions must be met: (a) The independent variable must have an effect on the mediator variable, (b) The mediator variable must have an effect on the dependent variable, (c) The independent variable must have an effect on the dependent variable and when the mediator variable is included in the model (c') the effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable must be lost (full mediator) or must be reduced (partial mediator). Accordingly, the research model is presented in Figure 1.

Using hierarchical regression models in the research, the steps for determining the mediator role indicated by Baron and Kenny (1986) were taken. Mediation models in statistics are models that analyze the relationship between the dependent and independent variables through the mediation of a third hypothetical variable and define it as partial or full mediation. Mediation models do not analyze the direct relationship between the dependent and the independent variable but the relationship of the independent variable with the mediator variable and the relationship of the mediator variable with the dependent variable. In other words, mediation models analyze the effects that are not apparent at the first look (Yılmaz and Dalbudak, 2018).

Study group

Convenience sampling was used to determine the study group of the research. Convenience sampling means "selecting people who are easily accessible as participants and continuing the process until the required sample size is obtained or accessible" (Cohen et al., 2011: 155). The data of the research was gathered from 420 students. However, upon realizing that some of the students did not fill in the questionnaires properly, those questionnaires were excluded from the study. In addition to this, since 8th grade students were preparing for one of the central exams in Turkey (LGS-High School Entrance Exam), the school administrators did not allow the data gathering tools to be used in these classes. Therefore, the study group consisted of a total of 394 secondary school students studying at 5th, 6th, and 7th grades. 50.5% (199 students) of these students were females, and 49.5% (195 students) were males. 28.7% (113 students) of the students in the study group were 5th grade students, 36.0% (142 students) were 6th grade students, and 35.3% (139 students) were 7th grade students.

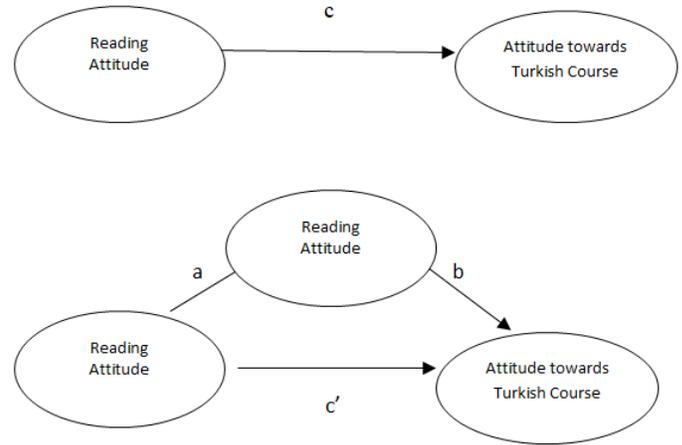


Figure 1. Mediation model of this research.

The research was conducted in three different schools in a city in Turkey in the academic year of 2018-2019. The necessary permissions were obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education before the data gathering tools were applied. During the application, the participants were given a research permission form, and were informed that all personal information would remain confidential; that they would not write their names on the forms; and that participation was on a voluntary basis.

Data gathering tools

Scale for attitude towards Turkish Course

In order to measure students' attitudes towards Turkish course, the Scale for Attitude towards Turkish Course which was developed for secondary school students by Topçuoğlu and Köse (2014) was used. The scale was prepared as a 5-point Likert type scale (5-Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree) consisting of 27 items. The scale consisted of three subscales as "Interest and love towards the course," "Negative attitudes towards the course," and "Activities for the course." "Interest and love towards the course" subscale consisted of 15 items; "Negative attitudes towards the course" subscale consisted of 8 items; and "Activities for the course" subscale consisted of 4 items. Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale was calculated as 0.915; and it was observed that the scale produced adaptive values at a good level [$\chi^2 = 610.08$, $\chi^2/sd = 1.90$, RMSEA = 0.066, GFI = 0.85, SRMR = 0.072, CFI = 0.86, NNFI = 0.85].

Reading attitude scale

In order to measure students' reading attitudes, Reading

Attitude Scale which was developed by McKenna and Kear (1990), and adapted to Turkish by Çakıroğlu and Palancı (2015) was used. The scale developed for secondary school students was prepared as a 4-point Likert type scale (4-Happy, 3-A little happy, 2-A little unhappy, 1-Unhappy). The scale consisted of 20 items and two subscales as "Leisure Reading" and "Academic Reading." Both subscales consisted of ten items. Reliability coefficient of the scale was calculated as 0.84 with internal consistency method, and 0.78 with test-retest method. Again, it was observed that the scale produced adaptive values at a good level [$\chi^2 = 5984.39$, $\chi^2/sd = 2.81$, RMSEA = 0.04, CFI = 0.94, AGFI = 0.91].

Writing attitude scale

To measure students' writing attitudes, Writing Attitude Scale which was developed by Can and Topçuoğlu Ünal (2017) was used. The scale developed for secondary school students was prepared as a 5-point Likert type scale (5-Strongly Agree, 4-Agree, 3-Neither Agree Nor Disagree, 2-Disagree, 1-Strongly Disagree). The scale consisted of 23 items and three subscales. "Interest" subscale consisted of 10 items; "Perception" subscale consisted of 6 items; and "Contribution" subscale consisted of 7 items. Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale was calculated as 0.891; and it was observed that the scale produced adaptive values at a good level [$\chi^2 = 497.54$, $\chi^2/sd = 2.19$, RMSA = 0.097, GFI = 0.75, SRMR = 0.091, CFI = 0.79, NNFI = 0.76, RMR = 0.071].

Demographic information form

To obtain certain information concerning the students' gender, age, grade levels, and families, demographic information form was used.

Data analysis

Pearson correlation analysis, linear regression, and hierarchical regression analyses were used between the continuous variables of the study. Following hierarchical regression models, the test developed by Sobel was applied to determine the mediation effect (Usta, 2009). Partial or full mediation is determined by measuring the significance of the decrease in the variance explained by the independent variable (Sobel, 1982; qtd. in Çetin et al., 2012: 207). For Sobel test calculations, an online software which is available at "<http://quantpsy.org/sobel/sobel.htm>" was used.

RESULTS

Within the frame of the research, firstly, the mean scores

for students' reading attitudes, writing attitudes and attitudes towards Turkish course were calculated, and the relationship between these variables was analyzed. The related findings are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Students' mean scores for "leisure reading" were determined as 29.094 ± 5.890 (Min = 10; Max = 40), for "academic reading" as 29.688 ± 5.303 (Min = 10; Max = 40), for "reading attitude" as 58.782 ± 10.295 (Min = 20; Max = 80), for "writing attitude" as 79.873 ± 19.304 (Min = 23; Max = 115), and for "attitudes toward Turkish course" as 91.564 ± 20.003 (Min = 30; Max = 132).

When correlation analyses between leisure reading, academic reading, reading attitude, writing attitude, and attitude towards Turkish course were analyzed according to Table 2, the following relationships were found: between academic reading and leisure reading $r = 0.691$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$); between reading attitude and leisure reading $r = 0.928$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$); between reading attitude and academic reading $r = 0.911$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$); between writing attitude and leisure reading $r = 0.551$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$); between writing attitude and academic reading $r = 0.505$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$); between writing attitude and reading attitude $r = 0.575$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$); between attitude towards Turkish course and leisure reading $r = 0.529$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$); between attitude towards Turkish course and academic reading $r = 0.464$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$); between attitude towards Turkish course and reading attitude $r = 0.542$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$); and between attitude towards Turkish course and writing attitude $r = 0.492$ ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$) relationships were found.

Secondly, the mediating role of writing attitude in the effect of reading attitude on attitude towards Turkish course was analyzed; and the findings are presented in Table 3.

In Model 1, the regression analysis which was performed to determine the cause and effect relationship between reading attitude and writing attitude was found significant ($F = 193.780$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Reading attitude explained 32.9% of the total variance in writing attitude level ($R^2 = 0.329$). Reading attitude increased the writing attitude level ($\beta = 1.078$).

In Model 2, the regression analysis which was performed to determine the cause and effect relationship between writing attitude and attitude towards Turkish course was found significant ($F = 125.059$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Writing attitude explained 24% of the total variance in attitude towards Turkish course level ($R^2 = 0.240$). Writing attitude increased the attitude towards Turkish course level ($\beta = 0.510$).

In Model 3, the regression analysis which was performed to determine the cause and effect relationship between reading attitude and attitude towards Turkish course was found significant ($F = 162.693$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Reading attitude explained 29.2% of the total variance in attitude towards Turkish course level ($R^2 = 0.292$). Reading attitude increased the attitude towards Turkish course level ($\beta = 1.052$).

Table 1. Mean scores for reading attitude, writing attitude and attitude towards Turkish course.

Variable	N	Mean	Ss	Min.	Max.	Alpha
Leisure reading	394	29.094	5.890	10.000	40.000	0.846
Academic reading	394	29.688	5.303	10.000	40.000	0.773
Reading attitude	394	58.782	10.295	20.000	80.000	0.886
Writing attitude	394	79.873	19.304	23.000	115.000	0.928
Attitude towards Turkish Course	394	91.564	20.003	30.000	132.000	0.907

Table 2. Correlation analysis between reading attitude, writing attitude and attitude towards Turkish course scores.

Variable		Leisure reading	Academic reading	Reading attitude	Writing attitude	Attitude towards Turkish Course
Leisure reading	r	1.000				
	p	0.000				
Academic reading	r	0.691**	1.000			
	p	0.000	0.000			
Reading attitude	r	0.928**	0.911**	1.000		
	p	0.000	0.000	0.000		
Writing attitude	r	0.551**	0.505**	0.575**	1.000	
	p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	
Attitude towards Turkish course	r	0.529**	0.464**	0.542**	0.492**	1.000
	p	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

* < 0.05; ** < 0.01.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression model for the mediating role of writing attitude in the effect of reading attitude on attitude towards Turkish course.

Dependent variable	Independent variable	β	t	p	F	Model (p)	R ²
Writing attitude (Model 1)	Constant	16.481	3.565	0.000	193.780	0.000	0.329
	Reading attitude	1.078	13.920	0.000			
Attitude towards Turkish Course (Model 2)	Constant	50.860	13.583	0.000	125.059	0.000	0.240
	Writing attitude	0.510	11.183	0.000			
Attitude towards Turkish Course (Model 3)	Constant	29.712	6.036	0.000	162.693	0.000	0.292
	Reading attitude	1.052	12.755	0.000			
Attitude towards Turkish Course (Model 4)	Constant	25.111	5.196	0.000	101.561	0.000	0.339
	Reading attitude	0.751	7.709	0.000			
	Writing attitude	0.279	5.373	0.000			

In Model 4, the regression analysis which was performed to determine the cause and effect relationship between reading attitude, writing attitude, and attitude towards Turkish course was found significant ($F = 101.561$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Reading attitude and writing attitude

explained 33.9% of the total variance in attitude towards Turkish course level ($R^2 = 0.339$). Reading attitude increased the level of attitude towards Turkish course ($\beta = 0.751$). Writing attitude increased the attitude towards Turkish course level ($\beta = 0.279$).

The effect of reading attitude on attitude towards Turkish course ($\beta = 1.052$) in Model 3 decreased when writing attitude was included in the model (Model 4) ($\beta = 0.751$). According to these findings and the results of the Sobel test, writing attitude was identified as a partial mediator variable ($Z = -3.347$; $p < 0.05$). In other words, reading attitude influenced attitude towards Turkish course both directly and through writing attitude. Within the frame of the research, finally, the mediating role of writing attitude in the effect of reading attitude subscales on attitude towards Turkish course was analyzed. The findings are presented in Table 4.

According to Table 4, in Model 1, the regression analysis which was performed to determine the cause and effect relationship between leisure reading, academic reading and writing attitude was found significant ($F = 97.548$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Leisure reading and academic reading explained 32.9% of the total variance in writing attitude level ($R^2 = 0.329$). Leisure reading increased writing attitude level ($\beta = 1.266$). Academic reading increased writing attitude level ($\beta = 0.866$).

In Model 2, the regression analysis which was performed to determine the cause and effect relationship between writing attitude and attitude towards Turkish course was found significant ($F = 125.059$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Writing attitude explained 24% of the total variance in attitude towards Turkish course level ($R^2 = 0.240$). Writing attitude increased attitude towards Turkish course level ($\beta = 0.510$).

In Model 3, the regression analysis which was performed to determine the cause and effect relationship between leisure reading, academic reading and attitude towards Turkish course was found significant ($F = 83.067$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Leisure reading and academic

reading explained 29.5% of the total variance in attitude towards Turkish course level ($R^2 = 0.295$). Leisure reading increased attitude towards Turkish course level ($\beta = 1.352$). Academic reading increased attitude towards Turkish course level ($\beta = 0.713$).

In Model 4, the regression analysis which was performed to determine the cause and effect relationship between leisure reading, academic reading, writing attitude and attitude towards Turkish course was found significant ($F = 68.541$; $p = 0.000 < 0.05$). Leisure reading, academic reading and writing attitude explained 34% of the total variance in attitude towards Turkish course level ($R^2 = 0.340$). Leisure reading increased attitude towards Turkish course level ($\beta = 1.003$). Academic reading increased attitude towards Turkish course level ($\beta = 0.475$). Writing attitude increased attitude towards Turkish course level ($\beta = 0.275$).

The effect of leisure reading on attitude towards Turkish course ($\beta = 1.352$) in Model 3 decreased when writing attitude was included in the model (Model 4) ($\beta = 1.003$). According to these findings and the results of the Sobel test, writing attitude was identified as a partial mediator variable ($Z = -3.004$; $p < 0.05$). In other words, leisure reading influenced attitude towards Turkish course both directly and through writing attitude.

The effect of academic reading on attitude towards Turkish course ($\beta = 0.713$) in Model 3 decreased when writing attitude was included in the model (Model 4) ($\beta = 0.475$). According to these findings and the results of the Sobel test, writing attitude was identified as a partial mediator variable ($Z = -3.199$; $p < 0.05$). In other words, academic reading influenced attitude towards Turkish course both directly and through writing attitude.

Table 4. Hierarchical regression model for the mediating role of writing attitude in the effect of reading attitude subscales on attitude towards Turkish course.

Dependent variable	Independent variable	β	t	p	F	Model (p)	R^2
Writing attitude (Model 1)	Constant	17.330	3.699	0.000			
	Leisure reading	1.266	6.758	0.000	97.548	0.000	0.329
	Academic reading	0.866	4.160	0.000			
Attitude towards Turkish Course (Model 2)	Constant	50.860	13.583	0.000			
	Writing attitude	0.510	11.183	0.000	125.059	0.000	0.240
Attitude towards Turkish Course (Model 3)	Constant	31.065	6.238	0.000			
	Leisure reading	1.352	6.787	0.000	83.067	0.000	0.295
	Academic reading	0.713	3.225	0.001			
Attitude towards Turkish Course (Model 4)	Constant	26.297	5.367	0.000			
	Leisure reading	1.003	4.929	0.000	68.541	0.000	0.340
	Academic reading	0.475	2.174	0.030			
	Writing attitude	0.275	5.293	0.000			

DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to determine the relationships between reading attitude, writing attitude, and the attitude towards Turkish course, and to analyze the mediating role of writing attitude in the relationship between reading attitude and the attitude towards Turkish course. The findings of the research have demonstrated that there is a significant positive relationship between reading attitude, writing attitude, and the attitude towards Turkish course, and that writing attitude mediates in the relationship between reading attitude and the attitude towards Turkish course. The results of the study are presented and discussed under two separate titles.

Relationships between variables

When the relationships between the variables were analyzed, significant relationships were found between leisure reading and academic reading; leisure reading and writing attitude; and academic reading and writing attitude. Accordingly, it was observed that students with high levels of leisure reading had high levels of academic reading, and similarly, students with high levels of leisure reading had high writing attitude. Students with high levels of academic reading were found to have high writing attitude as well; and significant positive relationships were determined between reading attitude and writing attitude, and the attitude towards Turkish course. Consequently, students with high reading attitude were found to have high attitude towards Turkish course and high writing attitude. The researches in the literature also support these findings (Baş and Şahin, 2012; Günlü and Oral, 2018; Sallabaş, 2008; Yıldız and Kaman, 2016).

In terms of the relationships between reading attitude and writing attitude, Günlü and Oral (2018) determined a relationship between academic reading, recreational reading and writing attitude in their research on primary school students. Further, as a result of their research at primary school level and partially secondary school level (2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, and 6th grades), Yıldız and Kaman (2016) have shown that there is a significant positive relationship between academic reading and recreational reading, and between reading attitude and writing attitude, which confirm the findings of the present study. Similarly, Temizkan and Sallabaş (2009) found a significant positive relationship between reading attitude and writing attitude in their research on university students.

Likewise, Baş and Şahin (2012) also pointed out a significant positive relationship between the reading attitudes and writing tendencies of secondary school students who constituted the target group of their study. These two language skills are always used together all through the education life of the individual, beginning from the primary school (Yıldız and Kaman, 2016); and

constitute two of the three skills necessary for lifelong learning (Akbaş and Özdemir, 2002). Moreover, most of the school learning is based on these two language skills. To conclude, individuals use these skills as the fundamental source of learning all through their lives. The most evident factor that affects reading and writing skills is the attitude towards these skills (Ünalveşeri, 2012); and the literacy development of children and their attitudes towards reading and writing are in a strong relationship starting from early ages (Cunningham, 2008). When all these are taken into account, students' attitudes towards these two variables may show similarities, and these variables may be related to each other.

In the literature, no research has been found that reveals the positive relationships between reading attitude, writing attitude, and the attitude towards Turkish course which constitute the findings of the present research. However, only in some studies have relations of attitude towards Turkish courses been identified with variables such as reading comprehension, writing skills, reading anxieties. In a research conducted by Ateş (2008), the mean scores for attitude towards Turkish course of students with high and mid-levels of reading comprehension were significantly higher compared to the students with low level of reading comprehension. In another research, Dursun (2018) determined a mid-level relationship in the negative direction between reading anxiety and attitude towards Turkish course, and accordingly, revealed that students with high levels of reading anxiety had low attitudes towards Turkish course.

On the other hand, in terms of writing skills, a significant positive relationship was found between the writing skills of 8th grade students and attitudes towards Turkish course (Aktay, 2019). These researches which demonstrate the relationships between attitude towards Turkish course and reading and writing show that reading and writing attitude may be related to attitude towards Turkish course as reading and writing skills are related to attitude. When the relationship of reading with reading attitude (Deveci, 2019; Martinez et al., 2008; McKenna et al., 1995; Ökcü, 2019) and the relationship of writing with the writing attitude (Bulut, 2017; Graham et al., 2012; Grahmann et al., 2007; Knudson, 1995) are taken into consideration, together with the fact that positive attitudes influence the development of language skills (Ellis, 1995), determining relationships between these variables is an expected result. Moreover, as indicated by Ateş (2008), considering that students are more successful in courses which they can understand and express themselves, it is possible for the students who have high levels of reading comprehension and can express themselves accurately to have high attitudes towards Turkish course.

The mediating role of writing attitude

The main objective of the research is to analyze whether

writing attitude has a mediating role in the relationship between attitude towards Turkish course and reading attitude. The findings of the research have shown that writing attitude has a partial mediating role in the relationship between the attitude towards Turkish course and reading attitude. Accordingly, reading attitude influences the attitude towards Turkish course directly and through writing attitude as well. That is to say, student's attitude towards Turkish course increases if the student likes reading and therefore has high reading attitude. Additionally, if students who have positive feelings towards reading also have positive feelings towards writing, their attitude towards Turkish course increases. When the relationships between reading attitude and writing attitude (Günlü and Oral, 2018; Temizkan and Sallabaş, 2009; Yıldız and Kaman, 2016) along with the fact that reading attitude predicts writing attitude (Ünal and İşeri, 2012) are taken into consideration, this finding is possible.

There are two basic language skills that constitute Turkish courses just as all language courses. The most fundamental of these skills is reading. Reading is the most basic skill of language courses; and another important skill is writing (Güneş, 2014). It is understood that for a student to like a course, be interested in a course, and cultivate a positive attitude towards that course, depends on different factors. In terms of Turkish course, liking the teacher, liking the school, liking the course materials, and previous learning experiences have an important place among these factors (Karasakaloğlu and Saracaloğlu, 2009; Kaya et al., 2009). If teachers enrich the class environment with interesting reading and writing activities, they can increase the attitude towards Turkish course.

In the literature, no research has been found that measures the effect of a learning environment enriched with reading and writing activities on attitude towards Turkish course. Yet, Uçgun (2013) determined a mid-level significant relationship in the positive direction between teachers' levels of motivating students and the attitude towards Turkish course. According to this, if teachers include activities to increase motivation, students' attitude towards Turkish course will increase. Consequently, it can be stated that the attitude towards Turkish course increases when teachers give a reading and writing education which motivates the students.

The relationship between reading and writing can be thought to be effective in revealing this finding. In researches in education, the relationship between reading and writing has been scrutinized since 1930s (Stotsky, 1983). It has constituted the focus of many researches for long years. Some studies have even claimed that reading and writing are different manifestations of a single skill (Mehta et al., 2005). Generally, researches have shown that "reading and writing rely on corresponding or correlated mental processes and isomorphic knowledge, though the nature

of the relations between reading and writing is different at different age or grade levels" (Fitzgerald and Shanahan, 2000: 42). Therefore, the obtained finding can be based on the general relationship between reading and writing. In a research on university students, Eroğlu (2013) reported that students who read more frequently had high writing achievement. Eminoğlu and Özer Özkan (2019) determined a significant positive relationship between the reading habits and writing skills of primary school 4th grade students.

Additionally, in her research on 4th, 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th grades, Koons (2008) pointed out a strong positive relationship between reading skills and writing quality in all grades; and indicated that this relationship was stronger in the 8th, 10th and 12th grades compared to the other grades. Besides these relationships, in studies modeling the relationships between reading and writing, it has been observed that reading and writing are not reverse processes, and that they influence each other. For instance, Shanahan and Lomax (1986) indicated that the interactive model was more effective than were the reading-to-writing model at the 2nd grade level and the writing-to-reading model at both 2nd and 5th grade levels. When they compared the writing-to-reading model with the reading-to-writing model, they found that the reading-to-writing model was superior to the writing-to-reading model. Abbott and Berninger (1993) and Berninger et al. (2002) put forward that reading was effective on writing in certain grade levels. Although reading comprehension predicted composition quality in all grade levels, composition quality predicted reading comprehension in 4th, 5th and 6th grade levels. It is also noted in the literature that good readers generally write well; and good writers are generally better readers (Juel, 1988). Consequently, it has been observed that there is an interactive relationship between reading and writing, and that these two language skills feed on each other. Within the framework of the relationships between reading and writing, in the present research, it can be suggested that reading attitude influences the attitude towards Turkish course through the mediation of writing attitude.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the study have shown that writing attitude has a partial mediating role in the relationship between the attitude towards Turkish course and reading attitude. It can be affirmed that the attitude towards Turkish course is one of the keys to academic achievement. Hence, the findings obtained through this research are important for the implementation of preventive interventions to enhance the attitude towards Turkish course. As the results of the research reveal that writing attitude has a mediating role in the relationship between the attitude towards Turkish course and reading attitude, it is highly important to develop activities that will increase students'

writing attitudes. In this regard, creative and motivating writing activities that will increase the writing attitudes of the students can be applied in Turkish courses. Again, such activities can also be included in Turkish course books. Additionally, cooperative writing activities can be applied in courses to increase students' writing attitudes. Apart from Turkish course, "Authorship and Writing Skills" course is also offered in schools; yet, it is only for a year in secondary school. These courses can be offered systematically and complementing each other every year in secondary schools. Besides this course, writing workshops in which students can participate voluntarily can be held in schools. In addition, the Provincial Directorate of National Education can organize an authorship workshop for the students as well. Students' reading attitudes can be increased by increasing their writing attitudes with the help of these activities; thus, their attitudes towards Turkish course can be enhanced.

This research presents an empirical evaluation and a theoretical framework concerning the relationship between secondary school students' reading attitudes, writing attitudes, and attitudes towards Turkish course. However, the results of the research can be evaluated within the context of certain limitations. The data in this study has been collected through self-reporting from secondary school students. However, the model can be applied to different levels of education. In this study, quantitative method has been used; yet, in other studies mixed methods in which quantitative and qualitative methods are used together can be applied. In this way, the relationships between the variables can be revealed in more details. This research is a cross-sectional research. Longitudinal studies can be conducted to test the effectiveness of the model. In this study, convenience sampling was used. The sample group consisted of secondary school students who were studying at 5th, 6th and 7th grades. Since 8th grade students were preparing for a central exam in Turkey (LGS-High School Entrance Exam), they were not included in the study. For this reason, the results of the study cannot be generalized for all secondary school students.

Finally, in this study, the mediating role of writing attitude in the relationship between the attitude towards Turkish course and reading attitude has been analyzed. In other studies, the mediating role of other variables in the relationship between the attitude towards Turkish course and reading attitude can be analyzed. For example, motivation can be investigated as a significant mediator variable in this relationship.

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