

Investigation of the Relationship Between the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill of Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language

OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 11

Special Issue: 1

Month: July

Year: 2023

E-ISSN: 2582-1334

Received: 05.03.2023

Accepted: 28.05.2023

Published: 15.07.2023

Citation:

Ersoy, E., & Çetin, D. (2023). Investigation of the Relationship Between the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill of Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 11(S1), 114–131.

DOI:


<https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v11iS1-July.6117>



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Abstract

The first and most important step of teaching Turkish to foreigners is to enable individuals to acquire four basic language skills. Writing, which is generally considered to be the last of these skills, is seen as the most difficult skill to be acquired by students. Writing autonomy is an ability that can increase individuals' attitudes and motivation towards writing, improve students' writing skill and contribute to the accomplishment of effective and permanent learning. The purpose of the current study is to investigate the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skill of students learning Turkish as a foreign language. The study group of the current study is comprised of 129 B1 and B2 level students attending the Turkish Teaching Centres in Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Uşak University and Bursa Uludağ University in the 2020/2021 academic year. In the study, the relational survey model, one of the quantitative research methods, was employed. The data of the study were collected with the compositions written by the students, a "Personal Information Form", a "Written Expression Rubric" and the "Writing Autonomy Scale". At the end of the measurement process, the data were analyzed by using Chi-Square Test, frequency and percentage values, Mann-Whitney U Test, Kruskal-Wallis H Test and Spearman's Rho. As a result of the study, it was found that the writing skill of the students with high levels of writing autonomy was also high, and it was determined that there was a positive, low and significant correlation between the writing autonomy and the writing skill of students learning Turkish as a foreign language.

Keywords: Teaching Turkish to Foreigners, Autonomous Learning, Writing Autonomy, Writing Skill

Introduction

Technological developments, international relations and globalization in recent years have given rise to the need for foreign language teaching and increased the number of studies in this field. With the increasing number of technologies, foreign language learning has become a necessity for nations to communicate. This necessity laid the groundwork for teaching Turkish as a foreign language. The Turkish learning needs of people who come to Turkey for reasons such as education, work, tourism, immigration, etc. clearly show that more research should be done in this field.

Foreign language teaching in Turkey began to gain great importance in the 1950s. Especially the number of students coming from the Turkish Republics to study at universities has increased and accordingly the field of teaching Turkish to foreigners has gained a greater importance. With the establishment of TÖMER for the first time within Ankara University in 1984, teaching Turkish to foreigners began to be systematically addressed (Göçer, 2013).

On the other hand, teaching Turkish to foreigners with Yunus Emre Institute and private education institutions continues to progress at a great pace. Today, Turkish has become a language spoken in many parts of the world and its importance is increasing with each day. Teaching Turkish as a foreign language is carried out in various institutions in our country and in many different countries in the world, and the number of these institutions in Turkey is increasing. The main missions of these organizations are to teach Turkish in a programmatic way and to enable the language to be learned more comprehensively and easily by including cultural elements.

As in mother tongue teaching, basic language skills are of great importance in foreign language teaching. In order for individuals to be competent in the foreign language they learn and to communicate in a healthy way, they need to be able to learn four basic language skills as a whole. They need to be able to use their speaking and writing skills effectively as expression skills as well as their reading and listening skills as comprehension skills. Temur and Yıldırım (2018) state that in foreign language teaching, it is aimed to develop skills for understanding first and then explaining, because in order to write an article, it is necessary to learn the rules of the language and to know how to write by improving the vocabulary. Writing, an act that can be used in all areas of life, refers to a comprehensive skill that extends from daily life to the needs of social life. This skill, which carries the strong and permanent aspects of the communication channel, is also very important for teaching Turkish to foreigners. The most used skill in the academic field, especially by students who come to Turkey for university education, is writing. According to Tiryaki (2013), the purpose of the writing skill in teaching Turkish to foreigners is to put the thoughts in the mind of the individual into writing in accordance with the grammar rules of Turkish and in a planned manner. Temur and Yıldırım (2018) also state that writing has two purposes: The first is to enable students to express themselves in Turkish, and the second is to enable them to learn Turkish words, sentences, text structure, spelling and punctuation and grammar rules, and to reinforce the learned subjects.

Writing skill is defined as “transferring a certain emotion, thought and knowledge to the reader by making use of observation and existing knowledge” (Süğümlü, 2016), “the way what is produced in the mind is transferred into writing” (Erol, 2016), “the skill of expressing what the individual hears, sees and designs in writing within the framework of certain rules” (Göçer, 2013). Writing skill is intertwined with reading, listening and speaking skills, but it is more difficult to learn than these skills. The writing skill requires effort focused on page layout, punctuation, spelling rules, integrity of meaning, beautiful handwriting, appropriate word selection and use, correct use of grammar rules, subject, main idea, writing style, harmony of introduction-body-conclusion parts in the composition and forms of thinking and expression (İnal, 2006). The fact that writing requires more effort than other skills may cause students to experience difficulties in acquiring this skill and even to develop negative attitudes towards writing. According to Byrne (1988), writing is the skill that individuals have the most difficulty with, and the reason for this is the psychological and cognitive problems and the problems experienced in the field of grammar. In addition to these reasons, problems such as the difficult and complex structure of the writing skill, its being the last skill taught, lack of time required for feedback and correction processes in the lessons, crowded classrooms and the inability of teachers to spare enough time for each student increase the negative attitudes towards writing.

In many studies on basic language skills of learners of Turkish as a foreign language, it is stated that students have the greatest difficulty in the writing skill (Akbulut, 2016; Candaş-Karababa, 2009; Maden, Dinçel and Maden, 2015; Özdemir, 2019; Polatcan, 2016; Yağcı, 2017). Açıık (2008) investigated the problems experienced by foreign students learning Turkish and suggested solutions and concluded that the students had the most difficulty in the writing skill with a rate of 40%. Similarly, in the studies conducted by Adalar-Subaşı (2010), Ak-Baçoğul and Can (2014), Bölükbaş (2011), Büyükikiz (2011), Büyükikiz and Hasırcı (2013), Emiroğlu (2014), Ercan-Güven and Akpınar (2020), Yağmur-Şahin (2013) and Yılmaz (2015), it

was determined that students had more difficulties or problems in the writing skill compared to the other language skills.

According to Bağcı and Başar (2013), it is normal for students to dislike a skill they have difficulty with and not want to work on this skill. In the study conducted by Genç-İlter (2014), it was concluded that one of the reasons for not developing the writing skill was that students were not motivated enough. Therefore, in order to improve the writing skill of individuals learning Turkish as a foreign language, they must first be willing and motivated, and start learning to write in a ready and willing manner. At this point, the concept of “autonomous learning”, which is one of the important elements that enables the student to get out of the passive state and become more interested and willing to learn, gains importance.

Autonomous learning is defined as the process of taking responsibility for learning at one’s own discretion. This process also includes the individual’s self-evaluation skills (Gardner and Miller, 1999). An autonomous learner is an independent individual who can actively plan his/her own curriculum, researches and questions rather than being satisfied with the information presented to him/her, knows how to learn effectively, motivates himself/herself to learn and takes responsibility for learning and can also make self-evaluation. An autonomous learner knows what he/she is learning and why. He/she is aware of his/her own abilities and has strong foresight. He/she believes that he/she can be successful in any work through his/her self-confidence and motivation. A learner who knows his/her own characteristics well observes himself/herself throughout the learning process, so he/she tries to compensate for his/her deficiencies and correct his/her mistakes. The autonomous learner, who can make his/her own self-evaluation, realizes the mistakes he/she has made and analyzes the reasons for these mistakes by questioning. He/she accomplishes successful learning with a critical point of view by compensating for his/her deficiencies and finding the source of his/her mistakes.

Benson (2005) lists the characteristics of autonomous learners as follows:

- They have their own working methods.
- They are curious and open to new learning.
- They are disciplined and responsible.
- They can make their own decisions.
- They are patient.
- They have awareness.
- They are self-confident.
- They have knowledge and skills about learning situations.
- They can make self-evaluation.

These qualities, which are also consistent with the teaching approach of constructivism, enable the student to be at the centre of the learning process and to manage their own learning process by seeking for the guidance of the teacher when needed.

Autonomy, which is seen as an effective learning ability for foreign language learning, helps the individual gain insights into what to pay attention to before starting language learning. Autonomous learning shows what should be learned and how and which direction should be followed to achieve the goal by enabling the foreign language learner to progress within a plan. Autonomous learning which makes it possible for students to take an active role in the classroom enables learners to choose the appropriate conditions, methods and techniques in the language learning process, to review learning strategies and to notice their deficiencies or weaknesses and thus to take responsibility for their own learning. Accordingly, all these abilities that students have in the autonomous learning process can be considered as the key to successful language learning.

As in every field of education, there have been world-wide developments in foreign language teaching. Due to the shift of focus from the teacher to the student, the concept of autonomous learning has attracted attention from educators and practitioners around the world (Kurt, 2016). Gardner and Miller (1999) argue that the student’s being at the forefront, that is, the replacement of student-teacher roles, is an important factor for language teaching. Therefore, in autonomous learning, where the teacher is in the background but can offer guidance where necessary, students’ ability to work independently and at the same time be active by being at the centre of the process will facilitate language learning and develop their autonomy skill.

“Writing autonomy”, formed on the basis of general autonomy, is a skill that can improve students’ attitudes and motivation towards writing, improve their writing skill and contribute to the accomplishment of effective and permanent learning. Writing autonomy, in which motivation and attitude are important, helps individuals to act responsibly and to reach their intended goals. The responsibility that students take during writing both increases their interest in writing and contributes to the development of their writing skill. In the autonomous learning process, individuals determine their learning goals with the method they have created by planning the writing process in line with their own wishes and taking responsibility for learning. Individuals with an understanding of autonomous learning manage the writing process independently and fulfil all their responsibilities. Autonomous individuals who know what their goals are and why they are writing, who can foresee what kind of results they will have and make self-evaluations when starting the writing process can achieve effective and lasting success. Students who become aware of their mistakes and deficiencies and try to correct these mistakes as a result of self-evaluation both achieve their goal of writing and develop their autonomy skill. Accordingly, attitudes and behaviours and motivation grounded on learner autonomy increase the writing success of students.

In studies investigating writing success on the basis of student autonomy, it is known that writing autonomy increases the motivation to write and fosters a positive attitude towards writing (Sukerti and Yuliantini, 2018; Süğümlü, 2016). Altunkaya (2020) also states that writing autonomy is a skill that requires students to be motivated towards writing by being responsible for their own learning at all stages of the writing process, to develop a positive attitude and to acquire the ability to plan and evaluate their writing appropriately. It is very important for students learning Turkish as a foreign language to be aware of their own responsibilities and writing autonomy skill, to be able to make their own learning plans and to know how to proceed in this direction, because these skills are thought to improve students’ language learning.

Autonomous learning is accepted as a prerequisite in the European Language Development File

prepared by the Council of Europe, and in this regard, adults and children are classified at different levels of individuality in foreign language learning (Eker, 2010). As with other language skills, autonomy has an important role to play in the development of the writing skill. When the literature is reviewed, it is seen that there are studies separately investigating the writing skill of students learning Turkish as a foreign language (Boylu 2014; Bölükbaş, 2011; Büyükkiz, 2011; İnan, 2013; İpek, 2020; Özarlan, 2018) and learner autonomy (Biçer, 2015; Eker, 2010; Süğümlü and Alver, 2021). However, no research has been found that directly examines the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skill of students learning Turkish as a foreign language. One of the main goals of writing education in teaching Turkish to foreigners is to improve students’ motivation and attitudes towards writing, to increase their level of writing autonomy and to develop their writing skill on the basis of their increasing writing autonomy. Therefore, this study will contribute to the achievement of these goals by determining the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skill of students learning Turkish as a foreign language.

In the current study, it is aimed to examine the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skill of students learning Turkish as a foreign language. To this end, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the level of the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language?
2. Does the level of the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language vary significantly depending on the variables of gender, age, purpose of learning Turkish and experiencing difficulty in writing lessons?
3. Is there a significant correlation between the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language?

Method

Research Method

This study, which aims to investigate the relationship between the writing autonomy and

writing skill of students learning Turkish as a foreign language, employed the survey model. “This model aims to determine the existence and/or degree of covariance between two or more variables.” (Karasar, 2016).

Study Group

The study group of the current study is comprised of 129 B1 and B2 level students attending the Turkish Teaching Centres in Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, Uşak University and Bursa Uludağ University in the spring term of the 2020/2021 academic year. These two levels were chosen because the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) defines B1 as “threshold level” and B2 as “advanced level” and because it is a functional intermediate level where an individual can easily convey his/her impressions about a subject and write various and detailed texts. In the study, it was tried to reach all the B1 and B2 level students attending Gazi University TÖMER, Kütahya Dumlupınar University TÖMER, Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University TÖMER, Uşak University TÖMER and Bursa Uludağ University TÖMER. However, as the lessons were delivered through distance education because of the Covid 19 pandemic, data could be collected only from 157 students attending Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University TÖMER, Uşak University TÖMER and Bursa Uludağ University TÖMER. This can be considered as a limitation of the study. After incomplete and wrongly filled scales were excluded from the study, analysis was made on 129 scales properly completed. Of the participating B1 and B2 level students, 18 (14.0%) were from Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University TÖMER, 84 (65.1%) were from Uşak University TÖMER and 27 (20.9%) were from Bursa Uludağ University TÖMER.

Information on the Demographic Characteristics of the Participating Students

The participants of the study are individuals with different demographic characteristics who came to Turkey from different countries and learn Turkish as a foreign language. Information about the participants’ gender, age, country of origin, mother tongue, purpose of learning Turkish and difficulties experienced in writing lessons were obtained through a personal information form.

Information on the Gender and Age of the Participating Students

Of the participating students, 54 (41.9%) are female and 75 (58.1%) are male. Their distributions across the age groups is as follows; 76 (58.9%) are in the age group of 20 and under, 39 (30.2%) are in the age group of 21-24 and 14 (10.9%) are in the age group of 25 and over.

Information on the Participating Students’ Countries of Origin and Mother Tongues

A total of 129 students from 27 different countries participated in the study. One student from Algeria, Ivory Coast, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, North Macedonia, Myanmar, Uzbekistan, Sudan each, 2 students from Indonesia, Palestine, Montenegro, Mali, Nigeria, Russia, Jordan each, 3 students from Guinea, 4 students from Albania, Djibouti and Syria each, 5 students from Morocco, 6 students from Iraq, 8 students from Yemen, 9 students from Turkmenistan, 10 students from Kazakhstan and Egypt each, 15 students from Afghanistan and 27 students from Somalia. There are 36 (27.9%) students whose mother tongue is Arabic, 31 (24%) students whose mother tongue is Somali, 12 (9.3%) students whose mother tongue is Persian, 13 (10.1%) students whose mother tongue is Turkmen, 7 (5.4%) students whose mother tongue is Kazakh, 6 (4.7%) students whose mother tongue is Albanian, 2 (1.6%) students whose mother tongue is English, 2 (1.6%) students whose mother tongue is Bambara, 2 (1.6%) students whose mother tongue is Russian, 1 (0.8%) student whose mother tongue is Tatar, 4 (3.1%) students whose mother tongue is Uzbek, 6 (4.7%) students whose mother tongue is French and 1 (0.8%) student whose mother tongue is Burmese.

Information on the Participating Students’ purposes of Learning Turkish

Of the students participating in the study, 83 (64.3%) stated that they learn Turkish in order to continue their undergraduate education, 34 (26.4%) in order to continue their graduate education and 12 (9.3%) in order to use it in other fields.

Information on the Difficulties Experienced by the Participating Students in Writing Lessons

Of the 129 students who participated in the study, 62 (48.1%) stated that they had difficulty in writing lessons, while 67 (51.9%) stated that they did not.

Data Collection Tools

In the study, the “Writing Autonomy Scale” developed by Tekşan and Süğümlü (2018) was used to determine the writing autonomy levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language. In order to determine their writing skill levels, students were made to write compositions on 5 different topics. These compositions were evaluated using the “Written Expression Rubric” developed by Büyükikiz (2011).

The validity and reliability study of the Writing Autonomy Scale developed by Tekşan and Süğümlü (2018) was conducted on a group of 319 middle school students. The scale consists of a total of 22 items and three sub-factors. These factors are “motivation and attitude” having eight items, “sharing and evaluation” having eight items and “planning and process” having seven items. The Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be .82. This coefficient shows that the scale is highly reliable. The scale is a three-point Likert scale with the response options of “Yes” (1), “Partially” (2) and “No” (3). The lowest score to be taken from the scale is 22 and the highest score is 66 (Tekşan and Süğümlü, 2018). A total score in the range of 22-36 indicates a low level of success, in the range of 37-51 indicates a medium level of success and in the range of 52-66 indicates a high level of success.

Student Compositions

In order to determine the writing skill levels of the students participating in the study, they were asked to write a composition by choosing one of the five topics given to them. In the determination of the composition topics, student levels (B1-B2) and learning outcomes that are stated to be suitable for these levels in the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) were taken into account. The topics offered to students to choose from are as follows:

1. Write one of your unforgettable memories as a composition.
2. Write a composition describing the measures that can be taken against environmental problems in the world.
3. Write a composition describing your dream home.
4. Write a composition describing a place you have visited and seen.
5. Write a composition describing your festival celebrations.

Written Expression Rubric

“Written Expression Rubric” developed by Büyükikiz (2011) consists of five different dimensions: “page layout, title, plan and process, language and expression, spelling and punctuation” and seventeen sub-dimensions including the features related to these dimensions. The scoring system of the features related to the dimensions is “very bad (1), bad (2), good (3), very good (4)”. The lowest score to be taken from the rubric is 17 and the highest score is 68. The developed rubric was tested by evaluating the compositions written by 50 foreign students attending Gazi University TÖMER in the 2007/2008 academic year, and the Cronbach Alpha reliability coefficient of the “Written Expression Rubric” was calculated to be .79. Since this value is greater than .70, which is the threshold reliability criterion, it can be said that this rubric is reliable.

Data Collection

Prior to the study, ethics committee approval was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University, dated 12.10.2020 and numbered 2020/20237. The necessary permissions for the research to be carried out were sent to the relevant institutions. In the study, lecturers working at TÖMER in the relevant universities got the students to write the compositions and then the compositions were given to the researcher. The Writing Autonomy Scale was completed online by the students.

Data Analysis

The data obtained in the study were analyzed in the SPSS 21 program package. Kolmogorov-

Smirnov Test and Shapiro-Wilk Test were performed to determine whether the data were distributed normally. Non-parametric tests were used in the analysis because the dataset was small and did not show a normal distribution. In the analysis of the data, Chi-Square Test, frequency and percentage values, Mann-Whitney U Test, Kruskal-Wallis H Test and Spearman’s Rho were used. Descriptive statistics were used for the percentage, frequency and arithmetic mean calculations of the data collected through the measurement tools.

The Mann-Whitney U Test was used to determine whether the writing autonomy and writing skill levels of the students vary significantly depending on the variables of “gender” and “difficulty in writing lessons” and Kruskal-Wallis H Test was used to determine whether they vary significantly depending on the variables of “age” and “purpose of learning Turkish”. Finally, Spearman’s Rho analysis was used to determine the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language.

Findings

In this section, the findings are discussed under

three headings in line with the purpose and sub-purposes of the study. Under the first heading, findings on the writing autonomy and writing skill levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language are discussed. Under the second heading, findings on whether the writing autonomy and writing skill levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language vary significantly depending on gender, age, purpose of learning Turkish and difficulty in writing lessons are presented. Under the third heading, findings on the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students are presented.

1. What is the level of the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language?
2. Does the level of the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language vary significantly depending on the variables of gender, age, purpose of learning Turkish and experiencing difficulty in writing lessons?
3. Is there a significant correlation between the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language?

Findings on the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill Levels of the Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language

Table 1 Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill Levels of the Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language

Scale	Level	f	%
Writing Autonomy Scale	Low (22-36)	2	1.6
	Medium (37-51)	48	37.2
	High (52-66)	79	61.2
	Total	129	100
Written Expression Rubric	Low (17-34)	25	19
	Medium (35-51)	46	35.7
	High (52-68)	58	45.3
	Total	129	100

Table 1 presents the data regarding the total scores of the students participating in the study from the Writing Autonomy Scale and the Written Expression Rubric. Accordingly, it can be said that the majority of the students have a high level of writing autonomy (61.2%). The writing autonomy of 37.2% of the students is at a medium level and that of

1.6% of them is at a low level. Similarly, it is seen that most of the students have a high level of writing skill (45.3%). The writing skill of 35.7% of the students is at medium level and that of 19% of them is at a low level. This shows that there is a parallelism between the writing autonomy and writing skill levels of the students.

Table 2 shows the arithmetic mean and standard deviation values for the writing autonomy and writing skill levels of the students

Table 2 Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values for the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill Levels of the Students

Scale	Dimensions	n	\bar{x}	S
Writing Autonomy Scale	Motivation and Attitude	129	1.58	.41
	Sharing and Evaluation	129	1.65	.40
	Planning and Process	129	1.50	.43
Written Expression Rubric	Page Layout	129	2.77	.55
	Title	129	1.84	1.06
	Plan and Process	129	2.55	.80
	Language and Expression	129	2.69	.72
	Spelling and Punctuation	129	2.64	.71

When the data in Table 2 are examined, it is seen that the writing autonomy levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language are the highest in the sub-dimension of “sharing and evaluation (\bar{x} =1.65, S=.40)”, followed by the sub-dimensions of “motivation and attitude (\bar{x} =1.58, S=.41)” and “planning and process (\bar{x} =1.50, S=.43)”. When the means of the scores obtained from the Written Expression Rubric are examined across the dimensions, it is seen that the dimension in which the students are most successful is “page layout (\bar{x} =2.77, S=0.55), followed by the dimensions of “language and expression” (\bar{x} = 2.69, S=0.72), “spelling and punctuation” (\bar{x} = 2.64, S=0.71), “plan and process”

(\bar{x} = 2.55, S=0.80), “title” (\bar{x} = 1.84, S=1.06).

Whether the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill Levels of the Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language Vary Depending on Different Variables

The results of the Kruskal-Wallis H and Mann-Whitney U tests, which were conducted to determine whether the writing autonomy and writing skill levels of the students participating in the study, vary significantly depending on the variables of gender, age, purpose of learning Turkish and difficulty in writing lessons are given below.

Table 3 Whether the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill Levels of the Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language Vary Significantly Depending on Gender

Scale	Dimensions	Gender	n	Mean Rank	ST	U	p
Writing Autonomy Scale	Motivation and Attitude	Female	54	62.59	3380	1895	.53
		Male	75	66.73	5005		
	Sharing and Evaluation	Female	54	58.94	3183	1698	.12
		Male	75	69.36	5202		
	Planning and Process	Female	54	62.21	3359	1875	.47
		Male	75	67.01	5025		
Page Layout	Female	54	71.84	3880	1656	.07	
	Male	75	60.07	4506			
Written Expression Rubric	Title	Female	54	70.50	3807	1728	.11
		Male	75	61.04	4578		
	Plan and Process	Female	54	70.81	3824	1712	.13
		Male	75	60.82	4562		

Written Expression Rubric	Language and Expression	Female	54	72.87	3935	1600	.04
		Male	75	59.33	4450		
	Spelling and Punctuation	Female	54	71.03	3836	1670	.10
		Male	75	60.66	4550		

According to Table 3, the writing autonomy of the students does not vary significantly depending on gender (“motivation and attitude” sub-dimension $U=1895, p>.05$; “sharing and evaluation” sub-dimension $U=1698, p>.05$; “planning and process” sub-dimension $U=1875, p>.05$). When the scores of the students from the Written Expression Rubric are analyzed on the basis of the dimensions, it is seen

that there is a significant difference in favour of the female students in the dimension of “language and expression” ($U=1600, p<.05$). However, no gender-based significant difference was found for the dimensions of “page layout” ($U=1656, p>.05$), “title” ($U=1728, p>.05$), “plan and process” ($U=1712, p>.05$) and “spelling and punctuation” ($U=1670, p>.05$).

Table 4 Whether the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill Levels of the Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language Vary Significantly Depending on Age

Scales	Dimensions	Age	n	Mean Rank	sd	X ²	p
Writing Autonomy Scale	Motivation and Attitude	20 and under	76	69.41	2	5.51	.06
		Between 20 and 25	39	53.47			
		25 and over	14	73.14			
	Sharing and Evaluation	20 and under	76	69.11	2	2.76	.25
		Between 20 and 25	39	56.94			
		25 and over	14	65.18			
	Planning and Process	20 and under	76	67.01	2	0.58	.75
		Between 20 and 25	39	61.53			
		25 and over	14	63.75			
Written Expression Rubric	Page Layout	20 and under	76	67.31	2	1.27	.53
		Between 20 and 25	39	63.86			
		25 and over	14	55.64			
	Title	20 and under	76	65.95	2	0.32	.85
		Between 20 and 25	39	64.78			
		25 and over	14	60.46			
	Plan and Process	20 and under	76	67.66	2	1.71	.43
		Between 20 and 25	39	63.87			
		25 and over	14	53.71			
	Language and Expression	20 and under	76	69.14	2	3.44	.18
		Between 20 and 25	39	62.33			
		25 and over	14	49.96			
	Spelling and Punctuation	20 and under	76	68.61	2	2.22	.33
		Between 20 and 25	39	61.32			
		25 and over	14	55.64			

According to Table 4, the scores taken from the sub-dimensions of “motivation and attitude” [$X^2(2)=5.51, p>.05$], “sharing and evaluation” [$X^2(2)=2.76, p>.05$] and “planning and process”

[$X^2(2)=0.58, p>.05$] in the Writing Autonomy Scaledo not vary significantly depending on the variable of age. Considering the mean ranks for all the sub-dimensions, it is understood that the level

of writing autonomy is the highest in students aged 20 and under, and the lowest in students aged 20-25. When the scores obtained from the Written Expression Rubric are evaluated, it is seen that the writing skills scores of the students taken from the dimensions of “page layout” [$X^2(2)=1.27, p>.05$],

“title” [$X^2(2)=0.32, p>.05$], “plan and process” [$X^2(2)=1.71, p>.05$], “language and expression” [$X^2(2)=3.44, p>.05$] and “spelling and punctuation” [$X^2(2)=2.22, p>.05$] do not vary significantly depending on the variable of age.

Table 5 Whether the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill Levels of the Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language Vary Significantly Depending on the Purpose of Learning Turkish

Scales	Dimensions	Purpose	n	Mean Rank	sd	X ²	p
Writing Autonomy Scale	Motivation and Attitude	Continuing undergraduate education	83	67.97	2	1.494	.474
		Continuing graduate education	34	59.47			
		Others	12	60.13			
	Sharing and Evaluation	Continuing undergraduate education	83	68.94	2	2.619	.270
		Continuing graduate education	34	57.54			
		Others	12	58.88			
	Planning and Process	Continuing undergraduate education	83	64.78	2	0.519	.772
		Continuing graduate education	34	67.72			
		Others	12	58.83			
Written Expression Rubric	Page Layout	Continuing undergraduate education	83	64.66	2	1.833	.400
		Continuing graduate education	34	61.31			
		Others	12	77.79			
	Title	Continuing undergraduate education	83	64.61	2	0.035	.983
		Continuing graduate education	34	65.50			
		Others	12	66.25			
	Plan and Process	Continuing undergraduate education	83	66.32	2	2.520	.284
		Continuing graduate education	34	57.75			
		Others	12	76.42			
	Language and Expression	Continuing undergraduate education	83	64.52	2	5.360	.069
		Continuing graduate education	34	58.35			
		Others	12	87.13			

Written Expression Rubric	Spelling and Punctuation	Continuing undergraduate education	83	64.78	2	2.939	.230
		Continuing graduate education	34	60.13			
		Others	12	80.33			

As can be seen in Table 5, the scores taken from the sub-dimensions of “motivation and attitude” [$X^2(2)=1.494, p>.05$], “sharing and evaluation” [$X^2(2)=2.619, p>.05$] and “planning and process” [$X^2(2)=0.519, p>.05$] of the Writing Autonomy Scale do not vary significantly depending on the purpose of learning Turkish. According to the scores obtained

from the Written Expression Rubric, the writing skill of the students does not vary significantly depending on the variable of purpose of learning Turkish (“page layout” $X^2(2)=1.27, p>.05$; “title” $X^2(2)=0.32, p>.05$; “plan and process” $X^2(2)=1.71, p>.05$; “language and expression” $X^2(2)=3.44, p>.05$; “spelling and punctuation” $X^2(2)=2.22, p>.05$).

Table 6 Whether the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill Levels of the Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language Vary Significantly Depending on the Difficulty in the Writing Lessons

Scales	Dimensions	Experiencing Difficulty in Writing Lessons	n	Mean Rank	ST	U	p
Writing Autonomy Scale	Motivation and Attitude	Yes	62	77.77	4821	1285	.00
		No	67	53.19	3563		
	Sharing and Evaluation	Yes	62	70.03	4342	1765	.14
		No	67	60.34	4043		
	Planning and Process	Yes	62	73.49	4556	1550	.012
		No	67	57.14	3828		
Written Expression Rubric	Page Layout	Yes	62	36.15	2241	288	.00
		No	67	91.70	6144		
	Title	Yes	62	45.90	2846	893	.00
		No	67	82.68	5540		
	Plan and Process	Yes	62	31.73	1967	14	.00
		No	67	95.79	6418		
	Language and Expression	Yes	62	32.17	1995	41.50	.000
		No	67	95.38	6391		
	Spelling and Punctuation	Yes	62	33.13	2054	101	.00
		No	67	94.49	6331		

As can be seen in Table6, while the writing autonomy scores of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language taken from the sub-dimensions of “motivation and attitude” ($U=1285, p<.05$) and “planning and process” ($U=1550, p<.05$) vary significantly depending on whether experiencing difficulty in writing lessons, the score taken from the sub-dimension of “sharing and evaluation” ($U=1765, p>.05$) does not vary significantly. When the mean ranks in the sub-dimensions of “motivation and attitude” and “planning and process” are

examined, it is seen that the writing autonomy levels of the students who have difficulty in writing lessons are higher than those who do not. When the scores obtained from the Written Expression Rubric are examined, it is seen that the students’ writing skill level varies significantly depending on having difficulty in writing lessons (page layout dimension $U=288, p<.05$; title dimension $U=893, p<.05$; plan and process dimension $U=14, p<.05$; language and expression dimension $U=41.50, p<.05$; spelling and punctuation dimension $U=101, p<.05$). When

the mean ranks in all the sub-dimensions are taken into account, it is understood that the writing skill levels of the students who do not have difficulty in writing lessons are higher than the students who have difficulty.

The Relationship between the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill of the Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language

Correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students participating in the study and non-parametric Spearman Rho correlation analysis was applied.

Table 7 The Relationship between the Writing Autonomy and Writing Skill of the Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language

Scales	Writing Autonomy Scale	Written Expression Rubric			
Writing Autonomy Scale	1	.28**			
Written Expression Rubric	.28	1			
Sub-Dimensions	Page Layout	Title	Plan and Process	Language and Expression	Spelling and Punctuation
Motivation and Attitude	.28**	.15	.27**	.29**	.23**
Sharing and Evaluation	.17*	.08	.15	.12	.12
Planning and Process	.28*	.17*	.25**	.22**	.29**

*p<.05, **p<.01

When Table 7 is examined, it is seen that there is a positive, low and significant correlation between the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language ($r=.28$, $p<.05$). According to this finding, it can be said that while the writing autonomy levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language increase, their writing skill levels also increase.

When the sub-dimensions are examined, it is seen that there is a positive, low and significant correlation between the sub-dimension of “motivation and attitude” in the Writing Autonomy Scale and the dimensions of “page layout” ($r=.28$, $p<.01$), “plan and process” ($r=.27$, $p<.01$), “language and expression” ($r=.29$, $p<.01$) and “spelling and punctuation” ($r=.23$, $p<.01$) in the Written Expression Rubric. There is a positive, low and significant correlation between the sub-dimension of “sharing and evaluation” in the Writing Autonomy Scale and the dimension of “page layout” in the Written

Expression Rubric ($r=.17$, $p<.05$). Moreover, there is a positive, low and significant correlation between the sub-dimension of “planning and process” in the Writing Autonomy Scale and the dimensions of “page layout” ($r=.28$, $p<.05$), “title” ($r=.17$, $p<.05$) “plan and process” ($r=.25$, $p<.01$), “language and expression” ($r=.22$, $p<.05$) and “spelling and punctuation” ($r=.29$, $p<.05$) in the Written Expression Rubric.

Results and Discussion

The results of this study, which aimed to determine the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skills of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language, are discussed within the framework of the students’ writing autonomy and writing skill levels, the comparison of these levels according to the variables of “gender, age, purpose of learning Turkish, difficulty in writing lessons” and the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students.

In light of the findings obtained in the study, it was determined that the majority of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language had a high level of writing autonomy (61.2%). The writing autonomy of 37.2% of the students was found to be at a medium level and that of 1.6% of them was found to be a low level. Similarly, it was seen that most of the students had a high level of writing skill (45.3%). The writing skill of 35.7% of the students was found to be at a medium level and that of 19% of them was found to be at a low level. The research findings of Büyükkiz (2011) also show that students learning Turkish as a foreign language have a high level of written expression success and support the findings of the current study. The highest writing autonomy score was obtained by the students for the sub-dimension of “sharing and evaluation”, followed by the sub-dimensions of “motivation and attitude” and “planning and process”. When the means of the scores obtained from the Written Expression Rubric were examined across the dimensions, it was seen that the dimension in which the students were most successful was “page layout”, followed by the dimensions of “language and expression”, “spelling and punctuation”, “plan and process” and “title”.

As a result of the study, it was seen that the learning autonomy scores taken from the sub-dimensions of “motivation and attitude”, “sharing and evaluation”, “planning and process” did not vary significantly depending on gender. When the literature was reviewed, no study was found investigating the level of writing autonomy of students learning Turkish as a foreign language. However, there are studies examining the writing autonomy levels of students in different age groups whose mother tongue is Turkish. Different from the result of the current study, Altunkaya (2020) concluded that the writing autonomy levels of middle school 7th grade students varied significantly in favour of female students. In the study conducted by Tekşan and Süğümlü (2019) to investigate the writing autonomy levels of middle school students, it was revealed that female students’ perceptions of “planning and process” regarding writing autonomy are higher than those of male students.

When the writing skill of the students was examined according to the gender variable, a

significant difference was found in favour of female students only in the dimension of “language and expression” in the Written Expression Rubric while no significant gender-based difference was found in the dimensions of “page layout”, “title”, “plan and process”, “spelling and punctuation”. Similarly, in the study conducted by Aksoy (2020), it was determined that the writing skill of students learning Turkish as a foreign language did not vary significantly by gender. Different from this result, in the studies conducted by Altunkaya and Ateş (2017), Bakır (2015) and Büyükkiz (2011), it was concluded that female students learning Turkish as a foreign language had higher written expression success than male students and that this difference was statistically significant.

Another result of the current study is that the mean scores taken by the students learning Turkish as a foreign language from all the sub-dimensions of the Writing Autonomy Scale did not varied significantly depending on the age variable. On the other hand, the writing skill level of the students was found to not vary significantly depending on the age variable. In similar studies conducted by Bakır (2015) and Büyükkiz (2011), no age-based significant difference was found in the written expression success of students learning Turkish as a foreign language. Contrary to these results, Aksoy (2020) found that the writing skill of students learning Turkish as a foreign language varied significantly depending on the age variable and that the mean writing skill score of the students in the 22-23 age group was higher than that of the other age groups. In another study conducted by Altunkaya and Ateş (2017), it was concluded that the writing skill scores of students learning Turkish as a foreign language varied significantly depending on gender, and the writing skill scores of the students in the 10-17 age group were higher than those of the other age groups.

In the current study, it was determined that both the writing autonomy and writing skill levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language did not vary significantly depending on their purpose of learning Turkish. This might indicate that the purpose of learning a language is not influential on writing success in the target language. Contrary to this result, Büyükkiz (2011) found that there is a statistically

significant difference between those learning Turkish for work and those learning Turkish for undergraduate education in favour of those learning Turkish for work and that there is a statistically significant difference between those learning Turkish for a purpose other than education and work and those learning Turkish for undergraduate education in favour of those learning Turkish for a purpose other than education and work.

When the writing autonomy levels of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language were analyzed according to the variable of difficulty in writing lessons, a significant difference was found in the sub-dimensions of “motivation and attitude” and “planning and process” in the Writing Autonomy Scale. And contrary to the expectation, the writing autonomy level of the students having difficulty in writing lessons was found to be higher than that of the students not having difficulty in writing lessons. Another result of the study is that the writing skill of the students varies significantly depending on the difficulty in writing lessons and the writing skill level of the students who do not have difficulty in writing lessons is higher than that of the students who have difficulty.

When the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students participating in the study was examined on the basis of the sub-dimensions, it was found that there is a positive, low and significant correlation between the sub-dimension of “motivation and attitude” in the Writing Autonomy Scale and the dimensions of “page layout”, “plan and process”, “language and expression” and “spelling and punctuation” in the Written Expression Rubric. Therefore, it can be said that students with high motivation and attitude within the scope of writing autonomy have a higher level of writing skill than students with low motivation and attitude. There is a positive, low and significant correlation between the sub-dimension of “sharing and evaluation” in the Writing Autonomy Scale and the dimension of “page layout” in the Written Expression Rubric. There is a positive, low and significant correlation between the sub-dimension of “planning and process” in the Writing Autonomy Scale and all the dimensions of the Written Expression Rubric (page layout, title, plan

and process, language and expression, spelling and punctuation). Thus, it can be said that the writing skill of the students who are good in the sub-dimension of planning and process is high.

As a result of the study, a positive, low and significant correlation was found between the writing autonomy and writing skill of the students learning Turkish as a foreign language. In this study, which was conducted within the context of autonomy, it was observed that students with high writing autonomy had a high level of writing skill. Norozi and Mohamadi (2015), who focus on the concept of autonomy in students’ being successful in writing activities and improving their writing skill, argue that these two concepts cannot be independent from each other. No study has been found in the literature examining the relationship between the writing autonomy and writing skill of students learning Turkish as a foreign language. However, studies on writing autonomy or learner autonomy in different languages have also revealed that autonomy is a predictor of writing skill. In the study conducted by Masita (2016), it was determined that there is a positive and significant correlation between the writing autonomy of students learning English as a foreign language and their proficiency in writing skill. In another study by Masoumzadeh (2016), it was concluded that there is a positive and significant correlation between the learner autonomy and writing skill of Iranian students learning English as a foreign language. Similarly, Shangarffam and Ghazisaeedi (2013) revealed that there is a positive and significant correlation between the learner autonomy of Iranian students learning English as a foreign language and their success in writing compositions in both mother tongue and second language. These studies support the result of the current study.

Conclusion

Studies have shown that students learning Turkish as a foreign language have more difficulty in writing than the other language skills (Ak-Başoğul and Can, 2014; Akbulut, 2016; Bölükbaş, 2011; Büyükikiz, 2011; Büyükikiz and Hasırcı, 2013; Emiroğlu, 2014; Ercan- Güven and Akpınar, 2020; Özdemir, 2019; Polatcan, 2016; Yağcı, 2017; Yılmaz, 2015). In studies where writing activities are conducted

on the basis of student autonomy, it is known that writing autonomy increases writing motivation and attitude (Sukerti and Yuliantini, 2018). In the study conducted by Bagheri and Aeen (2011), it was determined that students with higher levels of autonomy were more successful than other students, so writing autonomy could positively affect the writing skill. In this connection, writing autonomy is an important skill that should be acquired by students as it can contribute to the development of a positive attitude towards writing and increase academic success.

In autonomous learning, it is very important that the process, which is actively managed by the student, is supported by the teacher in the background. The teacher has an important role in motivating students to take more responsibility for their own learning and guiding them on how to become autonomous learners. According to Özçelik (2015), it is possible for students to know how to learn and to be an autonomous with the creation of appropriate conditions and teacher support. In the study conducted by Peng (2003, as cited in Dede, 2017), more than 90% of Chinese students stated that teachers are the most important factor affecting learner autonomy. In similar studies, it is emphasized that teachers have an important role in the classroom for students to gain learner autonomy in foreign language learning (Bajrami, 2015; Ningsih, 2019; Zhao, 2018; Zhuang, J. 2010). Therefore, teachers who teach Turkish as a foreign language should have the knowledge and skills required to develop the skill of autonomous learning in students in order to create an autonomous learning environment in the process of the acquisition of the writing skill. In this connection, the awareness of teachers working in TÖMER and other institutions where Turkish is taught as a foreign language about autonomy should be increased and their related skills should be improved at the same time. In the development of writing autonomy, it is important for students to be able to make their own decisions and develop their own strategies in the selection of writing tasks and strategies. Teachers should encourage students to use their autonomous writing skill in language skill lessons, and to do so, they should use appropriate teaching strategies and create appropriate learning environments.

One of the most difficult skills for learners of Turkish as a foreign language is writing. Activities can be prepared to develop students' writing autonomy and writing skill in accordance with the writing objectives set in the Curriculum for Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language and the levels determined in the European Common Framework. The writing objectives and activities included in the Curriculum for Teaching Turkish as a Foreign Language can be evaluated in terms of their suitability for the development of writing autonomy and necessary arrangements can be made.

This study is limited to B1-B2 level students attending Uşak University, Bursa Uludağ University and Muğla Sıtkı Koçman University TÖMER and learning Turkish as a foreign language. In addition, a limited number of students were reached in the study due to the Covid 19 pandemic worldwide. In order to obtain more reliable findings, future studies can be conducted with more participants, students studying at different universities and different language levels. In future studies, different variables that may affect writing autonomy in teaching Turkish as a foreign language can be examined.

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Acknowledgement

This study has produced from the master's thesis as titled "Analysis of the Relationship Between Writing Autonomy and Writing Skills of Students Learning Turkish as a Foreign Language".

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