Investigation of Story Writing Skills In Elementary School Students (4th-8th Grades)*

Nurhan Aktaş [i]
Selçuk Univesity

Mustafa Yıldız [ii]
Gazi University

Ayşe Dilek Yekeler Gökmen [iii]
Giresun University

Merve Ataş [iv]
Trabzon University

Abstract

The aim of this study was to examine elementary school students' story writing skills according to grade level within the framework of certain variables. The study was designed with a cross-sectional research model, one of the developmental research methods. The study group of the research consisted of 319 students attending 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades. A Story Writing Form developed by the researchers was used as the data collection tool in the research. In the data collection process, the students were given the story writing form and asked to write a story within a certain period by choosing one of the topics included in the form. To evaluate the stories written by the students, the 6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale was used. The research results revealed that the great majority of students used a title in their stories and that they created their stories with a single paragraph. On the other hand, it was seen that the grade level and gender variables had an effect on the quality of the stories. Generally, the quality of the stories improved as grade level increased, and girls wrote better quality stories than boys. However, this effect was not significant at every grade level.

Keywords: Writing Skills, Story Writing, Elementary School Students

----

[i] **Nurhan Aktaş,** Expert Dr., Department of Primary Teacher Education, Selçuk University, ORCID: 0000-0003-0264-5120

Correspondence: nurhanakts@gmail.com

[ii] **Mustafa Yıldız,** Assoc. Prof. Dr., Department of Primary Teacher Education, Gazi University, ORCID: 0000-0003-3885-5322

[iii] **Ayşe Dilek Yekeler Gökmen,** Research Assist Dr., Primary Teacher Education, Giresun University, ORCID: 0000-0003-1878-5494

[iv] **Merve Ataş Bıyık,** Research Assist, Department of Primary Teacher Education, Trabzon University, ORCID:0000-0003-2312-6418

INTRODUCTION

The story is a type of writing that has been used for various purposes for centuries. It can be defined as a fictional type of writing that deals with events that humans experience or can experience within the framework of elements such as place, time or people. The story is a genre that children from preschool onwards frequently use in their experiences and refer to in their narrations.

Children's ability to transform events that occur in both their real and imaginary worlds into stories is a skill that emerges at around the age of two (McCabe & Peterson, 1991). Later, as a literary style in which they gradually begin to take an interest together with age, children can learn all the story elements at around the age of eight (Pellegrini & Galda, 1982). After the ages of 10-12, their interest in this style of writing gradually increases further (cited in Temizkan, 2011). The story concept develops in children progressively over time by listening to the things they are told, and narrating and writing the things they read (Tompkins, 2008). Stories are important in terms of children's personal development and use of language. The child personally enables his/her emotions to develop by establishing a relationship between the hero of the story and him/herself. Akyol (2014) emphasised the importance of stories by stating that through stories, children enrich their vocabulary and recognise the power of language, and that they are a tool for children to convey their messages. The instruction of story writing is one of the learning outcomes included in curricula especially for students from elementary school onwards both in Turkey (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2019) and in other countries (e.g., CCSS, 2010, OMOE, 2006). Stories have an important place in writing skills as well as in reading and comprehension skills, and are used in written expression activities (Arıcı, Ungan & Şimşek, 2012).

A story should be written according to a certain plan and in such a way as to include specific features. In the mental design process, which is the first stage, the title is written first (Temizyürek & Çevik, 2017). In story writing activities, the title can also be added after the story is completed. The structure of the story includes the skill of ordering the paragraphs and the appropriate transition between the paragraphs, that is, organisational skill (Paquette, 2002). A good quality story will appear as the result of good organisation of ideas. While doing this, the writer's style also plays an important role. To be successful in the skill of story writing, the writer should have an accumulation of knowledge, and a vocabulary wide enough to express his/her feelings and thoughts (Yılmaz, 2019). Furthermore, in terms of cohesion in the story, it is important for the sentences created to be orderly and fluent, and for the transition between paragraphs to be consistent. Punctuation marks and spelling rules also enable the story to be understandable and effective. In sentences containing spelling mistakes, a change and differentiation of meaning may occur (Genç, 2017). Similarly, legibility of handwriting, page layout, and appropriate spaces between words are important for understanding of the story and achieving the message intended to be given to the reader. Although all these features/criteria are regarded as a complex skill due to the nature of written expression, teachers need to encourage their students to write stories (Ballard & Glynn, 1975) and to assess them, since assessment of writing lies at the core of effective writing instruction and learning (Jones, 2002). According to the analytic rubrics most frequently used globally for assessment of story writing skills, stories are evaluated with regard to style and content with certain criteria (e.g., Dunsmuir et al., 2015; Rezaei & Lovorn, 2010).

When studies conducted on the subject of story writing skills in the literature are examined, it is seen that they are mostly quasi-experimental and descriptive studies. Examination of the descriptive studies reveals research studies that examine story writing skills at different grade levels (Ulu, 2019; Duran & Yılmaz, 2019; Taş, 2019; Eğilmez & Berber, 2017; Kaynaş, 2014; Yasul, 2014; Yılmaz, 2008). When the results of studies made at elementary school level (Ulu, 2019; Duran & Yılmaz, 2019) are examined, students' stories were evaluated according to certain dimensions (sentence fluency, word choice, grammar, etc.) and it was concluded that students' levels were similar to each other and that their story writing levels were moderate. On the other hand, it was reported that when choice of topic was left to students, they created more successful stories. In story writing studies conducted at secondary school level, different grade levels were studied (e.g., fifth grade: Eğilmez &

Berber, 2017; sixth grade: Kaynaş, 2014; Yasul, 2014; Yılmaz, 2008; eighth grade: Taş, 2019), and as a common result of the studies, it was seen that students' story writing skills were not at the desired level. In these studies, the stories were discussed in terms of levels of self-efficacy and use of story components.

In experimental studies aimed at developing story writing skills, it was determined in studies conducted with fourth grade elementary school students (Başkan, 2019; Özkan & Karasakaloğlu, 2018; Kaya, 2016) that implementations made in line with the story writing curriculum improved students' written expression skills and increased their writing knowledge. In Kaya's (2016) study, it was reported that a writing approach based on metacognitive skills developed fourth grade students' story writing skills and that students gained some metacognitive skills (planning, editing, preparation, etc.) in their writing. McDonnell and Ludlow (2015) revealed that preparation of a written draft, which allowed children to create a mental schema related to their story writing skills, facilitated story writing in second grade elementary school students. As a result of quasi-experimental studies that were made, it was stated that students' story writing skills improved after they had received planned instruction related to story writing skills.

Similar results are seen in studies in which the 6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale was used for investigating the development of story writing skills (Coe, Hanita, Nishioka & Smiley, 2011; Paquette, 2002; Özkara, 2007). When students' story writing skills were examined, significant differences were determined in relation to ideas, organisation, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation after they had received instruction. In the study by Williams and Larkin (2013), a strong correlation was found between fluent reading skills and story writing skills. It was seen that students who had difficulty in correct pronunciation ability wrote poorer quality texts than students who could read normally. According to the results of that study, the fact that there is a strong correlation between reading skill, which is one of the most important language skills, and story writing skill is one of the reasons why students' story writing skills need to be examined developmentally.

When previous studies are examined, the lack of studies that discuss elementary school students' story writing skills developmentally in terms of grade level is striking. It is clearly seen that the majority of studies were conducted in relation to a single grade level (e.g., Ulu, 2019; Taş, 2019; Duran & Yılmaz, 2019; Başkan, 2019; Eğilmez & Berber, 2017; Kaynaş, 2014), and that according to the research findings, problems related to students' correct story writing skills continued from elementary school onwards towards higher grade levels. Furthermore, in studies related to story writing skills, (Kaynaş, 2014; Coşkun, 2005; Sallabaş, 2007; Kılıç, 2012; Küreci, 2017; Özkan, 2016), the story elements were generally considered for assessing these skills. Story writing is a writing activity that includes many features within it. Starting from this point, story writing skills should be evaluated in terms of both style and content.

Aim of the Study

The aim of this study is to examine the development of elementary school students' story writing skills according to grade level within the framework of certain variables. In line with this aim, answers were sought to the following questions:

1. To what extent do elementary school (4th-8th grade) students use titles in their stories?

2. To what extent do elementary school (4th-8th grade) students use paragraphs in their stories?

3. Does the total number of words used by elementary school (4th-8th grade) students in their stories differ significantly according to gender and grade level?

4. Do elementary school (4th-8th grade) students' stories differ significantly in terms of quality (ideas, organisation, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation) according to gender and grade level?

METHODOLOGY

Research Model

In this study, a cross-sectional research model, one of the developmental research methods, was used. Studies in which the data related to the research process are collected at one specific point in time, and which serve to reveal the state of the phenomenon examined at that moment, are known as cross-sectional studies (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2014). This method was chosen for examining the development of story writing skills in students from fourth grade of elementary school to eighth grade of secondary school because it offered the researchers the opportunity to examine and compare the development and changes in students at different grade levels by allowing them to access individuals in different age groups (Çiğdem, 2015).

Study Group

The study group of the research consisted of 319 students attending elementary school (4th grade) and secondary school (5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades). For determining the study group, the convenience sampling method was used, and three different state schools were chosen by taking account of transport conditions and the suitability of the schools (number of students, distance, etc.). In this sampling technique, the aim is to include participants who are suitable and willing to take part in the study (Creswell, 2005). Therefore, an effort was made to access a certain number of students from each class at 4th grade of elementary school and 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th grades of secondary school. By considering the fact that in the final years of elementary school, students have to a significant extent acquired fluent writing skills, the study was begun from the fourth-grade level. Furthermore, another factor in beginning to collect the research data from the fourth grade of elementary school was the fact that the students' story writing performances were analysed according to an assessment tool (the 6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale) that includes high level writing skills (sentence fluency, organisation of ideas, word choice, etc.). These students attended three state schools with a middle socioeconomic level in three different provinces (Ankara, Trabzon and Giresun). Data for the distribution of the study group according to gender and grade level are included in the table below.

Table 1. Distribution of students participating in study according to gender and grade level

Gender	Grade					Total
	4	5	6	7	8	
Female	41	29	40	22	22	154
Male	40	37	29	30	29	165
Total	81	66	69	52	51	319

As seen in Table 1, a total of 319 students at elementary and secondary levels were included in the study group. It is seen that approximately 48% (N=154) of the students were girls, while about 52% (N=165) of them were boys.

Data Collection Tools

A "Story Writing Form" developed by the researchers was used as the data collection tool in the research. For evaluation of the students' stories, the 6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale developed by Özkara was utilised.

Story Writing Form: The story writing form was developed by the researchers with the aim of determining the students' story writing skills. The form consists of three sections. In the first section, in order to gather personal information, questions related to students' grade levels and gender

are included. In the second part of the form, a story writing guideline consisting of four different topics for the students' story writing is given. First of all, by examining local and foreign story writing guidelines, ten topics for story writing were specified. Care was taken to select topics that were suited to the students' interests and levels, that they would be able to associate with their own lives, and by which they would be able to reflect the things they had read, their observations, ideas and imaginations. While writing texts or stories, students will mostly choose their ideas based on their own living environments, experiences, accumulations of cognitive knowledge and thinking skills (imaginations) (Wang, Chang, Lin & Chen 2018; Tompkins, 2008). The views of domain experts were consulted for selection of the topics. A form related to the subject was given to four academicians in the field of Turkish education and four classroom teachers. The experts were asked to give their ideas as to which topics would be more appropriate for the stories that elementary school students would be required to write, and to evaluate each topic with a score between 1 and 10. After the average scores were obtained, four topics were selected, starting with the highest score, and the other topics were eliminated. The third section of the form consists of two blank lined pages for students to write their stories. The topics included in the guideline are stated below. The students' topic choices are shown in Table 2.

Story Writing Topics:

Topic 1. *Write a story about a good or bad day that happened at school to a student who is the same age as you.*

Topic 2. *Write a story about events that happened to a kitten that was stuck in the street on a cold winter's day.*

Topic 3. *Imagine that you are a bird. Write a story about the events that happened to you during journeys you made to distant lands.*

Topic 4. *Write a story about events that happened to a child who has just moved to a new neighbourhood.*

Table 2. Elementary School Students' Choices of Writing Topic

Topic Choice / Grade	Topic 1		Topic 2		Topic 3		Topic 4	
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*	*f*	*%*
4th grade	10	3.1	32	10	11	3.4	28	8.8
5th grade	4	1.3	27	8.5	5	1.6	30	9.4
6th grade	5	1.6	24	7.5	12	3.8	28	8.8
7th grade	6	1.9	13	4.1	9	2.8	24	7.5
8th grade	10	3.1	10	3.1	11	3.4	20	6.3
Total	**35**	**11**	**106**	**33.2**	**48**	**15**	**130**	**40.8**

Table 2 reveals that most students (40.8%) chose the writing topic, "*Write a story about events that happened to a child who has just moved to a new neighbourhood*", which is the fourth writing topic. This selection was followed by the topic, "*Write a story about events that happened to a kitten that was stuck in the street on a cold winter's day*" (33.2). In third place came the topic, "*Imagine that you are a bird. Write a story about the events that happened to you during journeys you made to distant lands*" (15%), while the topic, "*Write a story about a good or bad day that happened at school to a student who is the same age as you*" came in last place (11%).

6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale: Developed by Education Northwest (2006) as the 6+1 Trait Writing Model of Instruction and Assessment, the scale was adapted to Turkish by Özkara (2007). The characteristics required for a good quality piece of writing are given under 7 headings. The headings included in the scale are ideas, organisation, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation. The products obtained from the students were assessed by the two researchers, who gave them scores of 5, 3 and 1 by considering the criteria for the characteristics

included in the 6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale. According to the scale, the highest score that a story can obtain is 35.

Before beginning the implementation, for the reliability of the scale, 30 students from each grade level were asked to write a story. The stories were evaluated independently by two domain experts using the analytic writing and assessment scale. For inter-rater reliability, calculation was made using Cohen's kappa coefficient. According to the findings obtained, a reliability coefficient of .89 was determined between the scores given by the two domain experts.

Data Collection Process

The research data were gathered from three state schools with a middle socioeconomic level in three different provinces during the spring semester of the 2015-2016 academic year. The data collection process was carried out by the researchers. Prior to the data collection process, the students were given information about the implementation. First of all, the students answered the questions included in the first section of the story writing form. Next, the story writing topics included in the second part of the form were read aloud by the researchers. The students were asked to choose one of these topics and indicate their choice on the form. The students were given a period of 25 minutes and asked to write a story on the topics they had chosen. The data collection lasted two weeks.

Data Analysis

Data were collected from a total of 330 students for the study. By performing outlier analysis following the initial examination, the data took their final form with 319 students. During the scoring process for the stories, firstly, the researchers gave separate scores independently of each other and then the obtained data were compared. After comparisons of the scores, the cases on which the researchers disagreed were reviewed, and the researchers scrutinised their analysis until they reached agreement on conflicting cases. Reliability of the study was calculated using the formula Reliability = Number of Agreements / (Number of Agreements + Number of Disagreements) X 100, and it was seen that reliability was enabled with a 90% rate of agreement. According to this formula, values of 70% and over are accepted as adequate (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

For analysis of the data obtained during the research, the SPSS 16.0 statistical software program was used. The stories were evaluated in two dimensions, namely quantitively and qualitatively. In the quantitative dimension, analysis was made according to whether students had written a title for their stories, the number of paragraphs in their stories, and the number of words that they used in their stories. In the analysis of these data, frequency (f) and percentage (%) distributions were calculated. In the qualitative dimension, the state of inclusion of the story features in the stories the students had written was examined. The quality of the stories was analysed according to the features included in the "6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale" (ideas, organisation, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation). Each characteristic was given a score of 5, 3 or 1 depending on its inclusion in the story. The conformity of the data to normal distribution was examined from the descriptive statistics and parametric test assumptions. Arithmetic means, standard deviation values, skewness and kurtosis coefficients for the story writing scores were taken into consideration. The measures of central tendency and normality values for the story writing scores are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Measures of Central Tendency and Normality Values for Story Writing Scores

Grade	n	Lowest	Highest	(X)	(Ss)	Skewness	Kurtosis
4	81	0	33	15.3	7.3	.018	-.972
5	66	7	35	19.2	7.1	.055	-.448
6	69	7	35	19.2	8.2	.409	-.619
7	52	7	35	18.6	6.5	.216	-.317
8	51	7	35	19.6	7.9	-.249	-.828

Examination of Table 3 reveals that according to grade level, skewness and kurtosis values for story writing scores range between -1 and +1, and that therefore, distribution is normal. The test results for homogeneity of variance are given in Table 4

Table 4. Results of Levene's Test for Homogeneity of Variance

Dependent Variable	sd1-sd2	F	P
Story Writing	4-314	1.00	.40

According to Table 4, the results of Levene's test show that there are no significant differences between groups in distribution of error variances of the dependent variables (F=1.00, $p>.05$), and that therefore, the variances are homogeneous. The normal distribution variances of the data were examined, and since normal distribution was observed, the scores for the features of the stories and the number of words in the stories were calculated with the two-way ANOVA test according to grade level and gender.

FINDINGS

In this section, findings obtained from the analysis of the research data are presented in line with the research questions.

1. Findings Related to the First Research Question

Findings related to the research question about the extent to which elementary school (4th-8th grade) students used a title in their stories according to the grade level variable are given in Table 5.

Table 5. Findings Related to Extent to which Elementary School Students Used a Title in their Stories

Grade Level	Title			
	Present		Absent	
	f	*%*	*f*	*%*
4th grade	68	84	13	16
5th grade	52	78.8	14	21.2
6th grade	57	82.6	12	17.4
7th grade	27	51.9	25	48.1
8th grade	20	39.2	31	60.8
Total	**224**	**70.2**	**95**	**29.8**

As shown in Table 5, it was determined that 224 (70.2%) of the students participating in the study wrote a title for their stories, while 95 (29.8%) of students did not write a title. Considering grade levels, it can be seen that the fourth grade was the grade in which students used a title the most (84%), while the eighth grade was the grade in which students used a title the least (39.2%). It is seen that as grade level increased, the case of students' using a title in their stories decreased.

2. Findings Related to the Second Research Question

Findings related to the research question about the extent to which elementary school (4th-8th grade) students used paragraphs in their stories according to the grade level variable are given in Table 6.

Table 6. Findings Related to Extent to which Elementary School Students Used Paragraphs in their Stories

Grade Level	One paragraph		Two paragraphs		Three or more paragraphs	
	f	**%**	**f**	**%**	**f**	**%**
4th grade	71	87.7	4	4.9	6	7.4
5th grade	56	84.8	6	9.1	4	6.1
6th grade	53	76.8	6	8.7	10	14.5
7th grade	42	80.8	2	3.8	7	15.4
8th grade	40	76.5	2	3.9	10	19.6
Total	**261**	**81.8**	**20**	**6.3**	**38**	**11.9**

According to Table 6, it is seen that that 261 (81.8%) of the students participating in the study formed a single paragraph in their stories, while 38 (11.9%) students wrote three or more paragraphs, and 20 (6.3%) students wrote their stories with two paragraphs. When grade levels are considered, it can be said that the grade in which students completed their stories with a single paragraph the most was the fourth grade ((87.7%), while the number of students in eighth grade who completed their stories with three or more paragraphs was greater than that in the other grade levels (19.6%).

3. Findings Related to the Third Research Question

Findings related to the research question about the total number of words found in the elementary school (4th-8th grade) students' stories according to the gender and grade level variables are given in Table 7.

Table 7. Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values for Number of Words in Elementary School Students' Stories
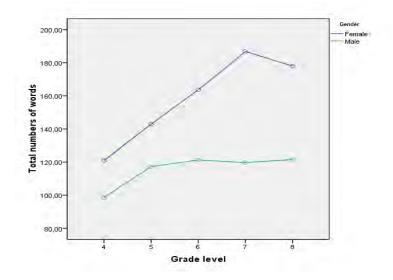
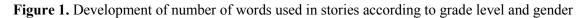| Grade	Gender	N	Arithmetic Mean (X)	Standard Deviation (Ss)
4	Female	41	120.951	37.823
	Male	40	98.650	45.977
	Total	81	109.938	43.263
5	Female	29	142.862	47.294
	Male	37	117.270	44.841
	Total	66	128.515	47.339
6	Female	40	163.725	39.563
	Male	29	121.310	43.593
	Total	69	145.898	46.097
7	Female	22	186.863	53.243
	Male	30	119.700	46.470
	Total	52	148.115	59.311
8	Female	22	177.954	52.004
	Male	29	121.551	48.313
	Total	51	145.882	56.911

Examination of the values included in Table 7 reveals that when the total number of words written by the students in their stories is considered on the basis of gender, female students used a greater number of words than male students in all grade levels. When examination is made on the basis of the grade level variable, it is seen that as grade level increased, the total number of words used by students in their stories also increased.

Table 8. Two-Way ANOVA Results Related to Grade, Gender and Total Number of Words

Variable	sd	F	p	η^2
Grade	4	10.315	.00	.118
Gender	1	67.821	.00	.180
Grade*Gender	4	2.750	.02	.034
Error	309			
Total	319			

As seen in Table 8, as a result of the two-way ANOVA test that was performed, when the total number of words used by students in their stories (5 grades X 2 genders) was compared, a significant difference between scores was determined with regard to grade, gender and the joint effect of grade*gender [$F_{(S)=}$ 10.315, p=.00; $F_{(C)=}$ 67.821, p=.00; $F_{(S*C)=}$ 2.750, p=.02). That is, as grade level increased, the number of words used by students in their stories increased and female students used a greater number of words than male students in their stories. Furthermore, the interaction between grade and gender also had a significant joint effect on the total number of words (p<0.05).

The graph showing the mean total numbers of words written by students in their stories according to grade level and gender is presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1. Development of number of words used in stories according to grade level and gender

When Figure 1 is examined, it is seen that the mean total number of words used by the elementary school children in their stories according to grade level and gender steadily increased in female students up to seventh grade, whereas it decreased in eighth grade. Considering male students, however, it is seen that a large improvement/increase in the number of words did not occur, although there was an improvement, albeit small, as grade level increased. When the graph is examined as a whole, it can be seen that in terms of the number of words used in their stories, female students were better than male students at all grade levels.

4. Findings Related to the Fourth Research Question

Findings related to the features (ideas, organisation, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation) of elementary school (4th-8th grade) students' stories according to the gender and grade level variables are given in Table 9.

Table 9. Arithmetic Mean and Standard Deviation Values for Quality of Elementary School Students' Stories

Grade	Gender	Ideas		Organisation		Voice		Word Choice		Sentence Fluency		Conventions		Presentation		Scale Total Score	
		(X)	(Sd)	(X)	(Sd)	(X)	(Sd)	(X)	(Sd)	(X)	(Sd)	(X)	(Sd)	(X)	(Sd)	(X)	(Sd)
4	F (41)	2.80	1.24	2.75	1.11	2.80	1.32	2.65	1.80	2.41	1.11	2.60	1.28	2.70	1.30	18.75	6.65
	M (40)	1.87	1.13	1.80	1.24	1.90	1.41	1.85	1.16	1.77	1.09	1.32	.88	1.37	.92	11.90	6.40
5	F (29)	3.55	1.29	3.20	1.23	3.06	1.25	3.34	1.07	3.06	1.46	3.13	1.30	3.00	1.19	22.37	6.95
	M (37)	3.00	1.24	2.62	1.31	2.29	1.26	2.56	1.06	2.29	.96	1.97	1.11	1.97	1.01	16.72	6.32
6	F (40)	3.05	1.53	3.00	1.50	2.82	1.46	3.15	1.23	3.00	1.28	2.70	1.60	2.90	1.46	20.62	8.68
	M (29)	2.79	1.11	2.93	1.36	2.31	1.33	2.44	1.18	2.37	1.32	2.10	1.26	2.31	1.22	17.27	7.34
7	F (22)	3.27	1.66	3.00	1.23	3.00	1.06	2.81	.85	3.18	1.22	2.81	1.22	3.09	1.15	21.18	6.73
	M (30)	2.80	.96	2.60	.96	2.46	1.38	2.20	1.12	2.46	1.38	1.86	1.13	2.33	1.09	16.73	5.81
8	F (22)	3.81	1.33	3.45	1.37	2.81	1.05	2.90	.97	3.09	1.30	3.36	1.77	3.54	1.10	23.00	6.61
	M (29)	2.51	1.15	2.37	1.32	2.31	1.33	2.37	1.32	2.58	1.45	2.44	1.40	2.44	1.05	17.06	7.95

According to the values included in Table 9, when the scores obtained from the "6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale" are evaluated in terms of gender, it can be said that female students' mean scores are higher than those of male students at all grade levels. When examined on the basis of the grade level variable, it is seen that the highest scores belong to female students in eighth grade. Considering all grades as a whole, the categories included in the scale and the mean scores are as follows: ideas X=29.45, organisation X=27.72, voice X= 25.76, word choice X= 26.27, sentence fluency X=26.21, conventions X=24.29, and presentation X=25.65. These results can be interpreted to say that in their story writing performances, students were more successful in the idea generation skill than in the other skills, whereas they were weaker in the conventions skill, which includes the punctuation marks and spelling rules of the story, than in the other areas.

Table 10. Two-Way ANOVA Results Related to Grade, Gender and Features of Stories

Variable	sd	F	p	η^2
Grade	4	5.163	.00	.063
Gender	1	42.402	.00	.121
Grade*Gender	4	.655	.62	.008
Error	309			
Total	319			

As seen in Table 10, as a result of the two-way ANOVA test that was performed, when the students' stories (5 grades X 2 genders) were compared in terms of the features they included, a significant difference between scores was determined with regard to grade and gender separately, but a significant difference was not found according to the joint effect of grade*gender [$F_{(S)}$= 5.163, p=.00; $F_{(C)}$= 42.402, p=.00; $F_{(S*C)}$=.655, p=.62). That is, as grade level changed, the extent of the students' inclusion of the story features also changed. Furthermore, female students' use of the story features was greater than that of male students. However, it was seen that the interaction between grade and gender did not have a joint effect on the extent of inclusion of story features (p>0.05).

The graph showing the mean scores obtained by elementary school students from the "6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale" according to grade level and gender is presented in Figure 2.
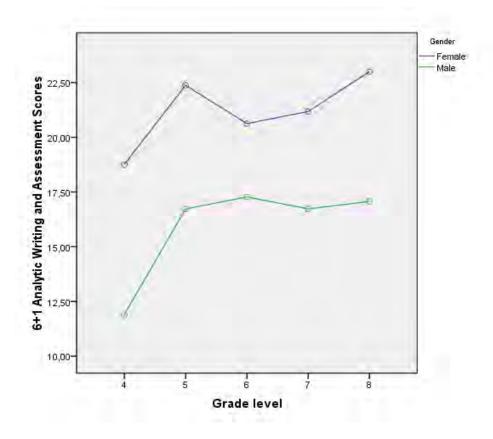
Figure 2. Development of story quality (6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale) according to grade level and gender

Examination of Figure 2 reveals that scores obtained by elementary school students from the "6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale" according to grade level and gender increased in both genders until fifth grade. In the first year of secondary school (fifth grade), it is seen that female students' scores decreased but that an increase occurred in male students' scores. Between sixth and seventh grades, however, scores increased in female students but decreased in male students. In the final years of secondary school (seventh and eighth grades), it is seen that students' scores continued to increase in both genders. When the graph is examined as a whole, it can be seen that the scores obtained by female students from the "6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale" were higher than those of male students at all grade levels.

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

In this study, which aimed to examine story writing skills of elementary school students (4th-8th grade), the extent of using a title, paragraphing, total number of words and story features in students' stories were examined according to students' grade level and gender. In the stories written by the students, first of all, the extent to which they used a title was examined. It was concluded that over half (70%) of the students used a title in their stories. Considering the grade level variable, it was seen that the grade in which students used a title the most was the fourth grade, while the eighth grade was the grade in which students used a title the least. It was concluded that as grade level increased, the frequency of using a title decreased. This situation shows similarity with the results of the study by Arıcı and Ungan (2008), in which they evaluated secondary school students' written narratives.

Secondly, the organisation of paragraphs formed by the students while writing their stories was examined. It was seen that the great majority of students (82%) created their stories with a single paragraph, and that even if the number of words used in their stories changed, the paragraphing (single paragraph) remained the same. In the study conducted by Duran and Yılmaz (2019) at elementary

school level, it was concluded that fourth grade students' paragraph knowledge in the stories they wrote was inadequate. In studies carried out with secondary school students, too (Arı, 2010; Bahşi & Sis, 2019), it was reported that students were unsuccessful in forming paragraphs in their stories. In Arı's (2010) study related to assessment of narrative texts written by sixth and seventh grade students, it was concluded that students generally wrote stories by using a single paragraph. In the study by Bahşi and Sis (2019), in which they examined fifth and eighth grade students' levels of creating sentences, paragraphs and texts, it was also determined that students' paragraphing skills were not at the desired level.

It was concluded that according to grade level and gender, the mean total number of words used in the elementary school students' stories increased as grade level advanced, and that female students were ahead of males in this regard. In other words, the number of words used in the elementary school students' stories showed a significant difference when considered in terms of gender, grade level and both variables together. Moreover, significant differences were also found between students at the same grade level in terms of the number of words they used in their stories. For example, in sixth grade, there was a student who wrote a story consisting of 39 words and another student who wrote a story made up of 324 words. This finding may be due to situations such as students' individual differences and different writing skills. In some studies conducted in the literature, it is seen that word types and number of sentences are generally calculated rather than comparisons based on grade level, and it is stated that the number of words is an important criterion for defining the quality of students' writing (stories) (e.g., Cameron, et al., 1995; Nelson & Van Meter, 2007).

When the stories written by the students were examined in terms of quality, it was found that the separate effect of the grade and gender variables was significant, but that the joint effect of the two variables together was not significant. When the elementary school students' story features (ideas, organisation, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions and presentation) were evaluated according to grade level and gender, a graph that is non-linear but that shows development appeared. When the elementary school students' stories were assessed according to the "6+1 Analytic Writing and Assessment Scale" on the basis of grade and gender, it was seen that their quality increased between fourth and fifth grade in both genders, that between fifth and sixth grades, it increased in male students but decreased in female students, that between sixth and seventh grades, it increased in female students but decreased in male students, and that between seventh and eighth grades, it increased in both groups. In general, in terms of inclusion of the story features, it is seen that female students were at a higher level than male students at all grade levels. This finding corresponds with the findings of research examining the effects of gender on story writing performance (Şimşek, 2000; Pearson, 2007; Bölükbaş, 2006; Arıcı & Ungan, 2008; Arı, 2010; Bağcı, 2011; Yalınkılıç, 2010; Kaynaş & Anılan, 2015; Özkan & Karasakaloğlu, 2018; Akyol & Aktaş, 2018; Ulu, 2019; Duran & Yılmaz, 2019).

It was concluded that in terms of story features, the students were most successful in the idea generation category, while the area in which they were weakest was conventions. This finding of the study differs from the previous research findings made by Eğilmez and Berber (2017). As a result of their study, in which they examined fifth grade elementary school students' story writing skills, Eğilmez and Berber (2017) determined that the area in which students were most successful when writing stories was the "language and expression" dimension, while the area in which they had the most difficulty was the "content" dimension, which included the story elements. In the conducted studies, it is stated that students placed emphasis on the quantity of their written texts rather than on their quality (Kırmızı & Beydemir, 2012; Tabak & Göçer, 2013; Yekeler, 2015). Moreover, a need is felt for serious writing instruction in order to obtain texts in which the ideas that are created do not repeat themselves or consist of random combinations, and the main idea is supported by auxiliary ideas (ideas); in which introduction, development and conclusion sections are included, and there is a title that is appropriate for and specific to the text and that reflects the main idea (organisation); in which the students are not indifferent to the topic (voice); which is easy to understand by including appropriate words (word choice); in which the writing is compelling and the reader is not bored while reading (sentence fluency); in which the rules of grammar are observed (conventions); and in which the handwriting is legible (presentation).

When the findings of the study are evaluated in general, it is seen that according to grade level, the increase in scores and number of words in the students' story writing performances showed a non-linear development. Since the students' writing experience increased as grade level increased, they had an understanding/belief that they would write better stories. However, with regard to the Turkish Curriculum (2019), it is seen that the learning outcomes related to students' story writing tasks do not show an improvement even though grade level increases, and that the same things are emphasised with different expressions. Furthermore, rather than expressions related to the content or quality of the stories, quantitative features are at the forefront (e.g., the 7th grade learning outcome: *"[students] will specify a title appropriate to the content of what they write"*; 8th grade learning outcome: *"Students will be enabled to design realistic or imaginary items according to the type of expression and topic, create a coherent time and space fiction, and include exposition, conflict and resolution sections"*).

Studies conducted in our country reveal that with regard to writing, students have many deficiencies in areas such as spelling and punctuation, planning, writing a title suited to the text, paragraphing, and sentences (Alkan, 2007; Ayyıldız & Bozkurt, 2006; Kırbaş, 2006; Arıcı & Ungan, 2008). Indeed, in the report published by the Ministry of National Education (MoNE) in 2020, it is seen that with regard to the results of the Turkish Language Exam for the Four Skills, the scores obtained by students in the writing skill were lower than the scores obtained in the other language skills (reading, speaking and listening). In a pilot study in which 1850 seventh grade students participated, it was seen that in the exam for determining writing skills, which also included a story writing task, students' writing achievement was very low. This situation supports the idea that writing instruction given to students is inadequate. The lack of a detailed and progressive story writing instruction that takes grade level into account has a negative effect on the development of story writing skills.

Recommendations

Students' writing activities can be structured as process-based activities aimed at developing their story qualities. For example, using example stories, students can be enabled to include an introduction, development and conclusion in the stories they create, thereby enabling them to associate paragraphing with these sections in their written texts. By not limiting their writing activities to a single topic, several story writing topics, which are within students' field of interest and in which they will take pleasure from writing, can be included. Göçer (2010) stated that the path to making writing enjoyable for students lies through equipping them in the subject of writing methods and techniques and defining interesting writing topics that will activate their imaginations. A cross-sectional research model was used in this study. In terms of seeing the development of students' story writing skills more clearly, a longitudinal research model which includes the same students can be used. Regarding the quality of students' stories, the number of sentences can be calculated by examination in the grammar dimension. The quality of writing in their stories can be examined by analysing the number of words according to the variety and types of words used.

Limitations

The most important limitation of this study is that the research data were collected from different provinces (Ankara, Trabzon and Giresun). Furthermore, the study is limited to 319 elementary school students, and these students' story writing performances are limited to the variables of grade level, gender, using a title, paragraphing and number of words. Moreover, the story writing performances were limited by the four topics that were given to the students.

REFERENCES

Akyol, H. (2014). *Programa uygun Türkçe öğretim yöntemleri*. Ankara: PegemA.

Akyol, H. ve Aktaş, N. (2018). The relationship between fourth-grade primary school students' story-writing skills and their motivation to write. *Universal Journal of Educational Research.* *6*(12), 2772-2779.

Alkan, Z. N. (2007). *İlköğretim beşinci sınıf öğrencilerinin yazılı anlatım hataları.* Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Osmangazi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Eskişehir.

Arı, G. (2010). Altıncı ve yedinci sınıf öğrencilerinin yazdığı hikâye edici metinlerin değerlendirilmesi. *Türklük Bilimi Araştırmaları, 27,* 43-75.

Arıcı, A.F. & Ungan, S. (2008), "İlköğretim ikinci kademe öğrencilerinin yazılı anlatım çalışmalarının bazı yönlerden değerlendirilmesi", *Dumlupınar Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi*, 20, 317-328.

Arıcı, A.F., Ungan, S. ve Şimşek, T. (2012). Çocuk edebiyatı türleri ve çocuk eğitimine katkıları. '. Baskı. Edt. T. Şimşek. *Kuramdan Uygulamaya Çocuk Edebiyatı.* Ankara: Grafiker Yayınları.

Ayyıldız, M. ve Bozkurt, Ü. (2006). Edebiyat ve kompozisyon eğitiminde karşılaşılan sorunlar (alan araştırması-Van ili örneği). *Türk Eğitim Bilimleri Dergisi*, 4(1), 45-52.

Bağcı, H. (2011). İlköğretim 8. sınıf öğrencilerinin noktalama işaretleri ile yazım kurallarını uygulayabilme düzeyi. *Turkish Studies- International Periodical For the Language, Literature and History of Turkish or Turkic, 6* (1), 693 – 706.

Bahşi, N. ve Sis, N. (2019). Ortaokul öğrencilerinin yazma düzeyleri ve yazılarında karşılaşılan sorunlar. *Milli Eğitim Dergisi.48* (224), 181-211.

Ballard, K. D., & Glynn, T. (1975). Behavıoral self-management ın story wrıtıng wıth elementary school chıldren. *Journal of Applied Behavior Analysis*, 8(4), 387-398.

Başkan, A. (2019). Yedinci sınıf öğrencilerinin öyküleyici metin yazma becerilerinin çeşitli değişkenler açısından incelenmesi. *Bolu Abant İzzet Baysal Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 19* (2), 453-467.

Bölükbaş, F. (2006), "Öğrencilerin okuma ve yazmaya yönelik tutumlarının bazı değişkenler açısından değerlendirilmesi", *Çağdaş Eğitim*, 333, 32-39.

Cameron, C. A., Lee, K., Webster, S., Munro, K., Hunt, A. K., & Linton, M. J. (1995). Text cohesion in children's narrative writing. *Applied Psycholinguistics,* 16(3), 257-269.

Coe, M., Hanita, M., Nishioka, & Smiley,R. (2011). An Investigation of the Impact of the 6+1 Trait Writing Model on Grade 5 Student Writing Achievement. Final Report. NCEE 2012-4010. http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/edlabs/projects/project.asp?ProjectID=52 adresinden erişildi.

Common Core State Standarts. (2010). English language arts standarts. *http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/* adresinden erişildi.

Coşkun, E. (2005). *İlköğretim öğrencilerinin öyküleyici anlatımlarında bağdaşıklık, tutarlılık ve metin elementleri.* Yayınlanmamış doktora tezi, Gazi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara.

Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2nd ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education, Inc.

Dunsmuir, S., Kyriacou, M., Batuwitage, S., Hinson, E., Ingram, V., & O'Sullivan, S. (2015). An evaluation of the Writing Assessment Measure (WAM) for children's narrative writing. *Assessing Writing*, 23, 1-18.

Duran, E. & Yılmaz, A. (2019). The evaluation of the fourth grades' writing story skill. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences.* 11(3).194-206.

Education Northwest. (2006). 6 + 1 trait writing. Retrieved from http://www.educationnorthwest.org.

Eğilmez, N.İ. & Berber, Z.T. (2017). Beşinci sınıf öğrencilerinin hikâye yazma becerileri. *Anadili Eğitimi Dergisi, 5*(2), 164-187.

Genç, N.H. (2017). Yabancı Dil Olarak Türkçe Öğretiminde Yazma Eğitimi Bağlamında Yazım ve Noktalama. *Dil Dergisi. 168,* 31-42.

Göçer, A. (2010). Türkçe öğretiminde yazma eğitimi. *Uluslararası Sosyal Araştırmalar Dergisi, 3*(12), 178-195.

Gürbüz, S. & Şahin, F. (2014). *Sosyal bilimlerde araştırma yöntemleri*. Ankara: Seçkin.

Jones, D. (2002). Keeping track: Assessment in writing. In M. Williams (Ed.), Unlocking writing: A guide for teachers (pp. 92–105).London: David Fulton Publishers Ltd.

Kaya, B. (2016). Üstbilişsel beceri odaklı yazma süreçlerinin dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerinin hikâye yazma becerisine etkisi. *(Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi)* Gazi Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara.

Kaynaş, E. (2014). *Beşinci sınıf öğrencilerinin öyküleyici metin yazma becerilerinin değerlendirilmesi.* Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Eskişehir Osman Gazi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Eskişehir.

Kaynaş, E. & Anılan, H. (2015). Beşinci sınıf öğrencilerinin öyküleyici metin yazma becerilerinin değerlendirilmesi. *Dicle Üniversitesi Ziya Gökalp Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 26,* 121-147.

Kılıç, B. (2012). *İlköğretim yedinci sınıf öğrencilerinin yazdıkları öyküleyici metinler üzerine bir inceleme*. Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Necmettin Erbakan Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Konya.

Kırbaş, A. (2006). *İlköğretim sekizinci sınıf öğrencilerinin yazılı anlatım becerilerinin değerlendirilmesi*. Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Atatürk Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Erzurum.

Kırmızı, F., & Beydemir, A. (2012). İlköğretim 5. sınıf Türkçe dersinde yaratıcı yazma yaklaşımının yazmaya yönelik tutumlara etkisi. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Kırşehir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi, 3* (13), 319-337.

Küreci, S. (2017). 4. sınıf öğrencilerinin yazdıkları hikâyelerin metin üst yapı unsurları doğrultusunda çözümlenmesi. *(Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi)*. Dumlupınar Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Kütahya.

Mccabe, A. & Peterson, C. (1991). *Getting the story: A longitudinal study of parental styles in eliciting narratives and developing narrative skill. developing narrative structure.* Hillsdale, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc.

McDonnell, M. ve Ludlow,S. (2015). Drawing before writing: A metacognitive scaffold to Year 2 children's story writing. TEACH COLLECTION of Christian Education, 1(1), 55-62. Retrieved from https://research.avondale.edu.au/teachcollection/vol1/iss1/6

Miles M.B. & Huberman A.M, (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded sourcebook*. 2nd Edition. Calif: SAGE Publications.

Nelson, N. W., & Van Meter, A. M. (2007). Measuring written language ability in narrative samples. *Reading & Writing Quarterly,* 23(3), 287-309.

Ontario Ministry of Education. (2006). *The ontario curriculum grades 1-8. Language.* http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/ adresinden erişildi.

Özkara, Y. (2007). *6+1 analitik yazma ve değerlendirme modelinin 5. sınıf öğrencilerinin hikâye edici metin yazma becerilerini geliştirmeye etkisi*. Doktora Tezi. Gazi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara.

Özkan, Ö. (2016). İlkokul dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerinin öykü yazma becerilerinin geliştirilmesi. *(Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi)*. Adnan Menderes Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Aydın.

Özkan, Ö. & Karasakaloğlu, N. (2018). İlkokul dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerinin öykü yazma becerilerinin geliştirilmesi. *YYÜ Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi (YYU Journal of Education Faculty), 15(1):220-247*.

Paquette, K. R. (2002). Cross-Age Tutoring Writing Program: Investigation of Academic Achievements and Attitudes Among Elementary Students. Ph.D Thesis. College Wilmington.

Pearson, E. F. (2007), *Assessing writing through reflection: A qualitative ınquiry*, Iowa State University unpublished phd disertation, UMI nu: 3259498, Iowa.

Pellegrini, A. D., & Galda, L. (1982). The effects of thematic-fantasy play training on the development of children's story comprehension. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19(3), 443-452.

Rezaei, A. R., & Lovorn, M. (2010). Reliability and validity of rubrics for assessment through writing. *Assessing Writing,* 15, 18–39.

Sallabaş, M. E. (2007). *İlköğretim beşinci sınıf öğrencilerinin kendilerini yazılı olarak ifade etme kazanımlarına ulaşma düzeyi*. Yayımlanmamış yüksek lisans tezi. Gazi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara.

Şimşek, Ö. (2000), *İlköğretim 4. ve 5. sınıf öğrencilerinin yazılı anlatım becerilerinin incelenmesi ve bilgisayar destekli yazılı anlatım*, (Marmara Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü Yayımlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi), İstanbul.

Tabachnick, B. G., & Fidell, L. S. (2013). Using Multivariate Statistics (sixth ed.) Pearson, Boston

Tabak, G., & Göçer, A. (2013). 6-8. Sınıflar Türkçe dersi öğretim programının ürün ve süreç odaklı yazma yaklaşımları çerçevesinde değerlendirilmesi. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Kırşehir Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi,* 14 (2), 147-169.

Taş, H. (2019). Ortaokul 8. sınıf öğrencilerinin yazma öz yeterlilik algıları ile hikâye yazma becerileri arasındaki ilişkinin değerlendirilmesi. *(Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi)*. Hatay Mustafa Kemal Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Hatay

Temizkan, M. (2011). Yaratıcı yazma etkinliklerinin öykü yazma becerisi üzerindeki etkisi. *Kuram ve Uygulamada Eğitim Bilimleri. 11* (2). 919-940.

Temizyürek, F. ve Çevik A. (2017). 5. Sınıf Zihinsel Tasarıma Dayalı Yazma Modelini Metin Oluşturma Sürecinde Kullanma Becerileri. Bartın Üniversitesi Eğitim Fakültesi Dergisi 6(1) 114-138.

Tompkins, G. E. (2008). *Teaching writing: Balancing process and product*. Boston: Pearson.

Ulu, H. (2019). Investigation of fourth grade primary school students' creative writing and story elements in narrative text writing skills. *International Journal of Progressive Education.* 15(5).273-287.

Yasul, A. F. (2014). *İlkokul 4. sınıf öğrencilerinin öyküleyici metin yazma becerilerinin değerlendirilmesi (Muş İli Merkez İlçesi Örneği).* Yüksek Lisans Tezi. İnönü Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Malatya.

Yekeler, A.D. (2015). *Yazma sürecine dayalı öğretimin ilkokul 4. Sınıf öğrencilerinin yazılı anlatım becerilerine etkisi.* Yayınlanmamış Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Gazi Üniversitesi Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü. Ankara.

Yalınkılıç, K. (2010). *Üniversite öğrencilerinin dil tutumları üzerine toplum dilbilimsel bir inceleme.* 3. Uluslararası Türk Dili ve Edebiyatı Kongresi. Web sitesi: http://www.academia.edu adresinden 10 Haziran 2012 tarihinde edinilmiştir

Yılmaz, S. K. (2008). *İlköğretim altıncı sınıf öğrencilerinin öyküleyici metin yazma becerileri.* Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Gazi Üniversitesi, Eğitim Bilimleri Enstitüsü, Ankara

Yılmaz, A. (2019). *İlkokul dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerinin hikâye yazma becerilerinin değerlendirilmesi.* Yüksek Lisans Tezi. Uşak Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.Uşak.

Wang, C.Y., Chang, C.K., Lin, K.J. & Chen, G. D. (2018). Effectiveness of web-based mechanism for teaching creative writing in the classroom. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International,* 1-13.

Williams, G. J. & Larkin, R. F. (2013). Narrative writing, reading and cognitive processes in middle childhood: What are the links?. *Learning and Individual Differences,* 28, 142-150.