

The Effect of Creative Writing Activities on the Story Writing Skill

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Ahstract

The aim of this research is to determine the effect of creative writing activities on the skill of university students in writing story genre text. Unequaled control group model which is half experimental is used in this research. 1/A section (experimental group) of standard class and 1/B section (control group) of evening class from Turkish Language Teaching Department of Gazi Education Faculty of Gazi University constitute the sample of the research. 60 students participate in the research in total. The data obtained from the result of creative writing activities processed in 10 weeks are evaluated with regard to "The Scale of Story Writing Skill". It has been revealed that according to scale of story writing skill there is statistically a significant difference between the points $[t(29) = -5,172; p \le .05]$ the students got from the post-test in the experimental and the control group. In other words, creative writing activities are more effective than traditional writing education in improving story writing skill. Besides, creative writing activities have a significant effect on content dimension $[t(29) = -3,668; p \le .05]$; planning dimension $[t(29) = -3,666; p \le .05]$; characterization dimension $[t(29) = -5,666; p \le .05]$; setting dimension $[t(29) = -4,479; p \le .05]$ and time dimension $[t(29) = -4,471; p \le .05]$ of story structure. According to these results, creative writing activities should be mentioned in Turkish courses and confidence in classroom should be taught in the relevant department of teacher training agencies and preservice teachers should be trained as qualified ones in terms of both practical and theoretical aspects of creative writing.

Key Words

Creativity, Creative Writing, Story Writing, Approach of Process.

Creativity is comprised of some qualities such as originality, extraordinariness, exceptionality, composing things in hitherto unseen ways (Ömeroğlu, 1990; Üstündağ, 2002; Yıldırım, 1998). San (2002) and Torrance (1998) define creativity as an ability which is present in all emotional and cognitive activities and in all kinds of work and endeavor, laying the foundations of all aspects of human life and development. At the heart of creativity lies the ability to make new connections among hitherto unassociated items and to come up with new experiences, new and original thoughts within this novel thinking scheme (İzgören, 1999; Kale, 1994; May, 1994; Sylvan, 1997; Turla, 2004).

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Creative Writing

Directly associated with creativity, creative writing means one's putting his or her ideas and feelings about a particular topic on paper by using his or her imagination freely (Oral, 2003). Creative writing involves going beyond the ordinary without deviating from the normal values, creating ideas that are different from everyone else's ideas with the help of one's imagination, achieving originality, and writing fluently while taking pleasure in the act of composing, and going beyond the standards (Küçük, 2007). Creative writing is characterized by originality and imagination rather than truthfulness or standardization of thoughts (Brookes & Marshall, 2004). Creative writing requires organization, planning, and discovery of thoughts and it rejects restrained thinking. "Recreating emotional experiences freely in mind" is a fundamental philosophy of creative writing (Sharples, 1996). Factors motivating students to become involved in creative writing activities include a higher order of thinking, exploration and observation skills, knowledge, a regular habit of reading, innovativeness, a critical eye for things happening around, richness of emotions and experience, sufficient use of information, communication technologies, and diversity of methods (Küçük, 2007). With the end of World War I, the concepts of democratic society and democratic citizenship became prevalent. At the same time, advances took place both in industrial development and social transformation as well as in the realm of international relations. These advances were reflected also in the field of education, giving rise to mottos such as "education of human force for the production of ideas" and "education for the benefit of the society." In the light of the aforementioned developments, the nature of writing started to transform. After the 1917 publication of the "Report on the Reorganization of English in Secondary Schools" (also known as the Hosic Report) by the U.S. Office of Education, according to the report, whose priority did not lie with creative writing studies, the expectation from written communication was to increase students' interest in the environment, to enable them to become informed about the environment (nature), and to improve their observational skills (Brand, 1980).

It is seen that in 1930s progressive education movements became influential in creative writing. Progressive educators described creative writing as "expressing oneself with words" and brought the personal aspect of the subject to the forefront (Mearns, 1926; 1929; Rugg & Schumaker, 1928). In 1930s, it is also expressed that creative writing had a psychotherapeutic value for the students. In line with this idea, creative expression not only helps self discovery but also restores the constructive power of the students (Conrad, 1937; Hogrefe, 1940).

The psychological basis and therapeutic value of creative writing have gained more significance in the postwar era of the 1950s. With the increasing personal and social interaction in that period, terms such as "the reorganization of life", "construction of mental health", and "resolution of depression" became directly associated with creative expression in order to relieve the destruction and depression caused by the war.

In 1960s, many institutions including the Modern Language Association, the American Studies Association, and the College English Association worked on the fundamental issues and problems of language education in American schools and colleges. In these studies, the contributions of creative writing to the cognitive structure of the human mind found recognition. Accordingly, creative writing studies would enable students to attain academic achievement and intellectual development.

One of the most significant works done in language education towards the 1970s was the conference entitled "The Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching and Learning of English", also referred to as the Dartmouth Conference. The overall theme of the Dartmouth Conference focused on a comparison between the American paradigm of subject-centered curriculum and the British paradigm of personal development. While American educators defined writing as a process by which information was constructed with the help of reporting, analyzing, and evaluating, their British colleagues characterized it as a process which reflects unstructured personal experiences in the light of psychological data.

Since the early 1980s a paradigm shift has occurred in the teaching of writing. The new paradigm has stressed phenomena such as focusing on the writing process with the help of the teacher when necessary, incorporating teaching strategies for discovery learning, and evaluating writing according to what extent the writer achieved his or her goal for writing. Accordingly, writing has been considered as a means of learning and development and a creative activity organized in line with certain analyzable and definable rules (Oral, 2003; Smith, 2000).

Creative Writing and the Genre of Story

In the basis of creative writing there is an aim of creating fictional world. Fiction, is the shape of artistic re-modelling of the materials taken from real life in the writer's dream life. The certain elements of fictional world are event, characters, setting, time, point of view and narrator. Also, the most suitable literary genres are narration, novel, and tale.

Writings which are based upon observation and designed in a brief, sensitive and exciting way with characters of realistic events generally mentioned among a few people at a certain time and place are narration. (Ciravoğlu,1998; Kıbrıs, 2000). The basic element in the texts of narrative genre is event. When the event is extracted from narrative texts, there will be plenty of words then (Aktaş, 2003).

Narrations emerge from the requirements of telling and listening of individuals and societies (Başaran, 2007). In terms of creative writing, the most suitable genre on study is narration. Because it contains both fictional and non-fictional elements in its structure, according to Uzuner (2007), creative writing should be allowed in narration more than other genres. Because the narration is a literary genre in which children start to be curious after a certain age. According to Miyasoğlu (1998), narration creates a study field in which creative thinking and creative writing activities can be commonly used. According to Arı (2008), children start to meet with narrative texts as they hear tale, story, joke from their elders. Experiences, enrichments of language, the words used freely, individual narrations, observations, and dreams take a crucial place in the content of creative writing (Chenfeld, 1978; Göğüş, 1978).

Sever (1991) indicates that writing which is creative, positive process and narration technique as a comprehension of message coming from noesis, decomposition of ideas, transmitting as a whole after reforming is necessity to be passed down. Aşıcıoğlu (1993), also indicates that it is certainly necessary to benefit from literary texts having qualification of fiction like narration to improve the writing ability. Creative writing is based upon expressing the impression provided from external world in a different presentation. Creative writing gives opportunity to students to choose their own writing subjects and methods. The importance of creative writing is undeniable to improve the cognitive and communicative skills of children (Cristopher, 1996).

The genre of story is based on narrating events, and as such, events constitute the main element in stories. All the other elements are weaved around the event to make the text. If the event is excluded from the story, what is left is a mass of words (Aktaş, 2003). Stories came into existence as a result of individuals' and societies' need of telling and listening. Humans feel the need to reflect what they have taken from life to the outside world. For this reason, it is possible to conclude that the genre of story goes as far back as the beginning of the human life (Başaran, 2007). Among the reasons for the students to write stories, Tompkins (1982) names the factors of entertainment, development of artistic expression, discovery of the value and function of writing, improvement of imagination, encouragement of open-mindedness, improvement of self discovery, and development of literacy. Since creative writing activities are mainly organized on the basis of event-oriented genres, it is necessary to have a look at these individually.

1. Content: The basic event, secondary events,

theme and thesis (main idea) which are taken up in the work constitute content dimension. First of all characters then setting, time, even point of view and narrators take part according to features of events to basic event part in this section (Aktaş, 2003; Çetin, 2006; Gündüz, 2003; Temizkan, 2009).

- 2. Organization: In the introduction, the event and the characters are defined, the framework of the problem is delineated and the reader is motivated to read the story. The introduction part of narration contains setting, time and decoration parts in which characters witness the event and there are enterprise, reaction, result parts in which a chapter of events are related with each other (Gersten & Dimino, 1990 and Morrow, 1985 cited in Arı, 2008). In the development part, the problem is displayed in all its clarity. In the conclusion the events are tied up and summarized (Akyol, 1999; Kantemir, 1995; Kıran & Kıran, 2003). The state of characters and settings or habits and activities of characters in narration is described in this section (Stein & Glenn, 1979).
- 3. The characters: If the story writer narrates a plot of events, naturally there will be a need for humans or human like beings involved in these events. Expecting that events will happen automatically without agents or experiences is contrary to the laws of nature. Aktaş (2003) classifies the characters in stories under the categories of protagonist, antagonist, and helping character. The conflict is basis element in short story (Başaran, 2007; Bolat, 2005).
- 4. Place: In the story, place is the scenery in which the events happen. For this reason, without a place it is not possible to talk about a plot of events. In the novel, story, and theater, a place—real or imaginary—is essential for the characters to have a fictitious life (Çetin, 2006; Çetişli, 2004). The setting in narration is the place or places where the event exists (Adalı, 2003).
- 5. Time: In every story, events take place within a certain period of time. It is necessary to mention a few concepts under the heading of time.

According to these general explanations the major problem which is searched for an answer is indicated as: "Is there any effect of creative writing activities on university students about the skill which contains a context about story genre?". Besides it is aimed to find the answers of following questions in the research:

1. Is there any effect of creative writing activities on the skill of university students to write a story genre context with regard to content dimension?

- 2. Is there any effect of creative writing activities on the skill of university students to write a story genre context with regard to planning dimension?
- 3. Is there any effect of creative writing activities on the skill of university students to write a story genre context with regard to characterization dimension?
- 4. Is there any effect of creative writing activities on the skill of university students to write a story genre context with regard to setting dimension?
- 5. Is there any effect of creative writing activities on the skill of university students to write a story genre context with regard to time dimension?

Method

The unequaled control group model which is half experimental is used with the aim of determining the effects of creative writing activities on skill of writing story genre context (Karasar, 2009). One class is selected as an experimental and another one is selected as a control group byusing impartial assignment. According to unequaled control group model, measurements are made on the pre-test and post-tests based on creative writing activities which are independent variability on the experimental and control group in this research. Creative writing activities are applied to students in experimental group as an independent variability.

Sample

1/B section (control group) of evening class and 1/A section (experimental group) of standard class from the Turkish Language Teaching Department of Gazi Education Faculty of Gazi University constitute the sample of research. 60 students participate in the research in total.

Measures

The Scale of Story Writing Skill: "The Scale of Story Writing Skill" developed by researcher is used with the aim of gathering data in the research. This scale is in the quality of rubric including 19 items. After the literature review, the activities in the process of writing story genre context are seen to be realized in 5 such major dimensions as "Content, Planning, Characterization, Setting, and Time". Therefore, the scale which would be developed was determined to contain these major dimensions in terms of evaluating the skill of writing story genre context. Each of items in the scale was prepared in the

type of 3 point-likert scale forming as 1 (poorly), 2 (should be developed), 3 (satisfactory).

Activities

Firstly, the experimental and control groups were determined and by urging both groups to write story genre context, these contexts are evaluated as a pre-test with regard to Scale of Story Writing Skill. Secondly, the instructions were given about activities designed for the students in experimental group. Creative writing activities were practiced in process of researching (10 weeks).

Results

According to the Scale of Story Writing Skill of the students in experimental and control group, it was determined that there was a significant difference between the points $[t(29)=-5,172;\ p\leq,05]$ students got from the post-test in conclusion of the research. According to this, creative writing activities were more effective than traditional writing education to improve story writing skill. Besides, following results were found in the research:

- 1. It was observed that there was a statistically significant difference between the points $[t(29)=-3,668; p \le ,05]$ the students got from the post-test in the experimental and the control group related to content dimension of story structure.
- 2. It was observed that there was a statistically significant difference between the points $[t(29)=-3,151; p \le .05]$ the students got from the post-test in the experimental and the control group related to planning dimension of story structure.
- 3. It was observed that there was a significant difference between points [t(29)=-5,666; $p \le 0,0,5$] the students got from the post test related to characterization dimension of story structure in the experimental and the control group.
- 4. It was observed that there was a significant difference between points [t(29)=-4,479; $p\le,05$] the students got from the post test related to setting dimension of story structure in the experimental and the control group.
- 5. It was observed that there was a significant difference between points $[t(29)=-4,471; p \le ,05]$ the students got from the post test related to time dimension of story structure in the experimental and the control group.

Discussion

Creative writing activities which are both amusing and educative were used in this research with in order to improve skill of writing story genre context. As a result, it was found out that there was a significant difference related to story writing skill from pre-experimental to post-experimental in the points got by the students in the experimental and the control group where creative writing activities and traditional education were applied.

It was found out in the research of Albertson, Luann and Felix (2001) who did it together that there was more qualified context in the writing of students who also used their self skill after being carried out creative writing activities. Ediger (1994) and Graves (1983) suggested some activities which could improve creative writing skill of students in his own study. Salim (2003) indicated in his own study that creativity and creative writing skill could be developed. Kutno (1993) determined that in consequence of the program which took 14 weeks and he applied it with the aim of improving writing abilities of 6th grade students related to genres based upon event, creative writing activities were effective on students' skill of writing context based on event. Majid, Kay ve Soh (2003) practiced "Creative Writing Programe" so as to improve creative writing skill of primary students in Singapore and they found out that the creative writing skill of students improved better than pre-experimental period.

Conroy, Marchand and Webster (2009) practiced "Writer's Workshop Program" to increase motivation of primary students for writing, especially for creativity and they upgraded the writing skill of students from %55 to %72. Success of the students of this study especially in acquiring about the components of story was supported with the findings related to our research's major dimension of story structure.

With the structure of reflecting perception devoted to external world from which the students make observations with their own experiences and making a possibility to use the language effective and creative and making students be effective in the process of writing, creative writing approach is an effective choice for solving the problems in the practice of traditional writing (Maltepe, 2006). Grant (2000 cited in Öztürk, 2007) indicated that giving time to children for producing idea; strategy for widening idea; providing an opportunity for speaking and sharing and encouraging students to study with their peer groups for generating idea provides posi-

tive effect for their creative writing skill. According to Rubin (2000) the students needed class environment in which they felt psychological confidence, shared their ideas with other students and concentrated themselves to write creative writing. In the research carried out by Colantone, Cunningham and Dreznes (1998), the creative writing abilities of the students at the level of primary school were aimed to improve in consequence of an experimental practice. Nobody was criticized but supported owing to the activities they made and ideas they presented in the process of practice in accordance to the nature of creative writing. It was observed that there was an increase in the writing skill of the students who were at the level of primary school in consequence of the research. Gunning (2005) also emphasized that creativity was based on imagination in a great extent, so imagining in class environment was a technique which could improve the creative writing. According to Conrad (1937) the process of creative writing with the function of making students be aware of their own experience and explaining them disciplinal was necessary for progressing of students both as a writer and as a individual.

Öztürk (2007) also reached such a result in his experimental study which was carried out to improve the creative writing skill of 5th grade primary school students. It was determined in the consequence of practices that creative writing activities made a significant difference on the skill of the students' ideas organization (introduction, body part, conclusion). Coşkun (2005) indicated in his study carried out to make cohesion, coherence, and components of context on the written expression of 5th and 8th grade students that 5th grade students composed %70,5 of the main character, 8th grade students composed %77 of it. These rates took place in higher level with the help of creative writing activities.

Kuvanç (2008) indicated that using creative writing activities was effective on the increase of vocabulary of the students; Mollaoğlu (2002) indicated that after applying the creative writing skill, there was an improvement on the German vocabulary of the students. According to Quandt (1983) as the process of the writing means being creative, the words in the memory of the students should be used naturally by the students.

It is possible to say that creative writing activities are as effective in both writing activity and on the attitude of the students related to course as on the performance of the writing, Özbek (2006) indicated that creative thinking programme which he developed improved the attitudes of the students related to their written expression studies in the pre-class of foreign language. Mildrum (2000) emphazised that the education programme which he practiced with the name of "creativity with ten courses" improved the creativity and creative writing and attitudes of the students in primary and secondary school. According to Kuvanç (2008) creative writing activities were more effective than traditional writing studies based on improving attitudes of the 5th grade students for Turkish course. According to Lock (1991) creative writing activities not only increased the interests of the students towards to course but also improved their creativity by motivating them to think. There was no statistical finding about creative writing activities are whether effective or not in attitudes of the students towards to course or writing activities in our research, however, according to the observations of researcher, attitudes of the students devoted to writing activities were positively affected in this research where creative writing activities were practiced.

Meeting the needs of today's society comprised of qualified individuals requires the application of an educational approach aiming to develop creativity, inquisitiveness and critical thinking instead of existing systems which discourage students form thinking for themselves. In a similar fashion, educational settings related to expression should be organized to encourage children to express their ideas with a fluent style freely. Students would like to write freely in a relaxed classroom environment away from all pressures and fears including the fear of being judged.

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