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## Turkish language teachers' creative drama competence and opinions

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### Abstract

Teachers need to have a positive opinion and competence for the thought or knowledge they plan to convey in any acquisition. It is important to determine the opinions and competencies of the teachers about the creative drama method in order to successfully complete the creative drama processes, which is an effective practice in Turkish education, and for teachers to apply creative drama as a method in their professional lives. Therefore, in this study, it is aimed to determine the competencies of Turkish teachers about creative drama method and their views on creative drama. The study group of the research consisted of 60 teachers who were active Turkish teachers in the province of Balikesir in the 2022-2023 academic year. A two-question structured interview form developed by the researcher was used as a data collection tool in the study, in which the basic interpretive qualitative research design, one of the qualitative research methods, was used. The obtained data were analyzed using descriptive analysis technique. According to the results obtained from the research, Turkish teachers do not see themselves in a good position in terms of proficiency in applying creative drama as a method. However, they expressed a positive opinion on their contribution to the Turkish lesson and students regarding the application of creative drama as a method. In addition, they said that they could benefit from creative drama practices in Turkish lessons such as expressing themselves in groups, developing communication skills, helping each other, developing positive relationships, cooperating, accepting each other as they are, and creating sincere environments.

Keywords: creative drama, Turkish education, teacher competencies and opinions.

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## INTRODUCTION

Modern humans are expected to have the capabilities of applying and transforming the obtained knowledge to become successful in life. Similarly, individuals are required to take charge of their own learning and improve their learning processes. Today, these expectations are possible with the constructivist approach that has introduced a different perspective for education/teaching and with constructivist teachers. The transition from the industrial society to the society of information has multifaceted effects on both formal/informal education and the teaching profession (Özcan, 2011). Considering that traditional teaching methods are not sufficient to train individuals equipped with skills required by recent times, it is crucial for individuals and society to improve the quality of modern education and make it up to date with the age. At this point, teacher plays a vital role as the basis of an effective instructional process.

Currently, teachers have been evolving from the type of teacher who conveys knowledge to the type of creative teacher who produces the knowledge itself. In this respect, it is important to know not only the education that teachers received in undergraduate education, but also what they learned after undergraduate education and how they developed themselves because monitoring the development of teachers also necessitates continuous training. This way, if these skills are not sufficient in teachers, they take on a traditional teacher identity and shape the learning process in that direction. In traditional education systems where the teachers are at the center, teachers transfer the information to the students and manage the whole learning process themselves. In connection, it can be said that the traditional approach is far from creating an effective learning process (Avcı Aykaç & Metinnam, 2018).

As opposed to the traditional approach, the constructivist approach views learning as a social and collaborative effort, as well as solving real-life problems and taking on unique tasks. Therefore, teaching focuses on how students learn and improve learning and thinking strategies rather than how much is learned. In the constructivist approach, the teacher is in the role of structuring the process and facilitating the learning process, and the classes are formed in accordance with this structure. It is defined as classical methods based on one-way communication, such as the expression method, which is used extensively in our education system today, or as teacher-centered methods. Emphasis is placed on giving uniform knowledge and skills from such methods. In learner-centered contemporary methods, where attention is more focused on individual and group work, students are motivated to creativity, problem solving, developing their own ideas and putting these ideas forward (Küçükahmet, 2003).

Constructivist classroom environments are places where students make inquiries, do research, and enable active participation in the learning and teaching process, rather than being a place where information is transferred to the learner. In the most general sense, it can be said that constructivism means encouraging individuals to use new and effective teaching techniques and making them active in the classroom. In the center of the constructivist approach, creative drama is one of the most effective methods that a Turkish teacher can use in a lesson and can improve the creativity of the students. Creative drama is an activity carried out within the framework of workshops by a trainer trained in this field, and the trainer and participant group interact throughout the process.

In order to create an effective drama process, achieve the targeted gains, and maintain the drama process correctly and in accordance with its purpose, teachers who apply this process should have sufficient knowledge both in their own fields and in creative drama education (Akgün, 2013). In this direction, determining that Turkish teachers are effective in using the creative drama method can be seen as a supportive situation for the Turkish education process. Creative drama activities are a process that the participants figuratively reside in, and they provide different environments for the participants to experience events, concepts, and situations during the activities. Individuals who participate in drama

studies learn by discovering situations, events and relationships in the drama process (O'Neil & Lambert, 1995).

In the creative drama process, the participants improvise on an event pattern or idea they have determined, regardless of a scenario, and act out the behaviors appropriate for the role. This allows them to have experiences closest to reality on the subject. From the drama processes, which consist of the interaction between the real world and the fictional world, the participants enter and exit fictional situations from reality (Okvuran, 2003). In this all process, various games and play-like processes are sometimes used as well as improvisations. In order to be able to benefit from games effectively in Turkish lessons, it is a basic prerequisite that these lessons are saved from the traditional classroom environment and taught in an educational environment suitable for the structure and quality of the lesson. Classrooms where Turkish is taught should be equipped to allow students to communicate face- to-face and to gamify various life situations in the texts (Sever, 2006: 11).

In creative drama processes games have a great place and importance in reaching the determined goals of Turkish education, which aims to give students the habit of multidimensional thinking and human-specific sensitivities, and to make them sense the reality of human and life (Sever, 2008: 446). The fact that Turkish education has responsibilities such as understanding and explaining students' skills, making decisions, solving problems, producing alternative solutions to problems, taking responsibility, developing thinking skills, feeding their sensitivity shows that the Turkish education process and the game phenomenon have a great overlap in the context of what they bring to the person.

For this reason, the opportunities provided by the game should be used frequently in Turkish lessons, and that game phenomenon is considered as an inseparable part of Turkish lessons. Similarly, Korucu and Kurtlu (2016: 546) also stated that the place and use of games, which are effective in raising happy, sharing, social and expressive people, in Turkish education, which is one of the most important dynamics of society and education, is extremely important.

There are two dimensions of learning in creative drama lessons. These; learning about the nature of creative drama and learning through creative drama. It can be said that these two dimensions are similar in Turkish teaching. For example, in a Turkish lesson, students both learn about their mother tongue and have knowledge about different subjects through their mother tongue. In other words, in the texts taught in the Turkish lesson, students not only have a good grasp of the subject in that text, but also improve their language skills through the text.

In Turkish lessons, it is aimed to develop the comprehension and expression skills of the individual. Through the use of creative drama method in these lessons, quite different and effective results will be achieved compared to the learning that takes place in the form of transfer of knowledge through basic lecturing. In this context, the drama method finds its place in education programs with its role in raising contemporary people who evaluate, develop new perspectives, think, research and question different situations (Aykaç & Ulubey, 2008; Ören & Ormançı, 2010). In drama workshops, the participants create a fictional reality based on their own lives under the guidance of the instructor. This helps the participants to develop their own creativity and aesthetic sensibilities.

Similarly, in the Turkish Language Curriculum, which was renewed by the Ministry of National Education by considering the developments in science and technology, it is aimed to train individuals who can produce information, use this information in daily life, and have communication skills and empathy skills. One of the main purposes of Turkish lessons is to improve students' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. Accordingly, Turkish lessons are taught based on the development of these skills, which are called the four basic language skills. It is a known fact that people who have effective communication skills and are highly competent in interpersonal communication are very successful both

in their daily lives and in their professional lives. Creative drama supports the development of creativity of individuals, develops their imaginations, and enables them to show multi-dimensional development by gaining skills related to their developmental characteristics (Adigüzel, 2003).

Since the aim of teaching Turkish is to develop comprehension and expression skills, one of the most appropriate methods for the development of these skills is drama. In drama practices that are not dependent on a written text, besides improving the verbal expression skills of the students through improvisation, it is also tried to develop their ability to express a situation freely. This method is very useful especially for text summaries or evaluations about the text (Yalçın & Aytaş, 2002) and gives an opportunity to reveal the talents of the child who plays through improvisation.

Turkish teachers also need to have knowledge and skills about creative drama to raise today's creative individuals. The qualifications of teachers, such as the level of knowledge they have about contemporary methods and techniques, which have intensified with the developing technologies, as well as their views on these methods and techniques will be effective in applying these techniques to students. It is known that the behaviors and attitudes of teachers in the teaching process directly affect the instructional activities they will perform (Ilgaz, Bülbül, & Çuhadar, 2016).

Drama studies, which can be applied at all levels of education and for people of all ages, can be integrated with the contemporary education system by breaking the boring patterns of education and create teachers and students who feel the need and excitement for self-development (Okvuran, 2019). It is important for the teacher to gain self-efficacy in order to continue the drama process in a correct and healthy way (Susar Kırmızı & Saygı, 2015). Another important issue is the teachers' views on the correct use of the creative drama method in educational activities, as well as their competencies in this subject.

Similarly, the effectiveness and functionality of the drama course is directly proportional to the teachers' competencies and attitudes towards drama (Gündoğdu, 2009). In order for the creative drama education to be given correctly and in accordance with the target in Turkish education, the teachers' having a certain level of competencies that they can give this education will guide the teachers in shaping the drama processes.

One of the important factors for a qualified drama education is the teacher who is a drama practitioner. Because it is the teachers to raise individuals who are suitable and effective for the age, and teacher competencies are shown as one of the factors affecting the quality of education (Gömlüksiz & Serhatlıoğlu, 2013). The most important task that the teacher will undertake in the successful realization of the creative drama application is to be the group leader. Teacher as drama leader; should make the necessary preparations, encourage students to be voluntary participants, establish a connection between learning with the tips and corrections and directions and ensure the effective implementation of the method with feedbacks (Selvi, 2013). Since drama practices depend on the behaviors, personal characteristics, prior knowledge and approach styles of the teacher who manages the process, at the same time, it is seen that teachers are important in providing the expected benefit from drama because they are active members of the process.

Creating an efficient creative drama process depends on the teacher having certain characteristics (Çetingöz, 2012). Self-education capacity of teachers who direct the course is important in order to use drama, which aims to increase the permanence of learning with the opportunity to learn by doing and experiencing, in Turkish education and to realize the gains (Gürol, 2003). In addition to the skills, knowledge and cognitive field competencies of the teachers, it is also important to know their views on the subject (Hein, 2012).

For this reason, Turkish teachers' efforts to develop and improve their professional skills must be identified since Turkish teachers' competencies and views on creative drama affect them significantly

in terms of integrating relevant content and activities with Turkish lessons and shaping their practice-oriented behaviors in their classrooms. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine the competencies of Turkish teachers regarding creative drama method and their views on creative drama. To achieve the main purpose of the research, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. How competent do Turkish language teachers consider themselves in the field of creative drama? (They were administered a scale with items they can rate themselves from 1 to 7)
2. What are the opinions of Turkish language teachers regarding creative drama (on behalf of themselves and their students)?

## **METHOD**

### **Research Model**

In the research, the basic interpretive qualitative research design was used as one of the qualitative research methods. Basic interpretive qualitative study is used when the researcher aims to understand how participants construct meaning or understand a phenomenon. In this study, the aim was to determine Turkish language teachers' competence in and views on the creative drama method.

Therefore, interpretive qualitative research is a deductive research strategy that utilizes interviews, observations, and document analysis (such as written outputs from participants) to obtain data (Merriam, 2002). This method was employed to obtain the data for this research.

### **Study Group**

The study group of the research consists of sixty active Turkish language teachers who work in Balıkesir province during the 2022-2023 academic years. Personal information regarding the teachers was collected, but it was not used in the study as it would not contribute to the overall value of the research. Variables such as gender and seniority were excluded from the study.

### **Data Collection Tools**

In the study, a two-item structured interview form developed by the researcher was used as the data collection tool. The opinions of three separate experts in the field were obtained during the development process of the form. The final version of the structured interview form was evaluated and used in the study.

### **Data Analysis**

The research data were analyzed through the descriptive analysis technique. In descriptive analysis, the obtained data is summarized and interpreted according to previously determined themes (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013). The data obtained from the interviews with the teachers were analyzed in a way that would reveal the teachers' competence in and views on the creative drama method.

After analyzing the data obtained from the interviews, the data were accumulated under three main themes and interpreted with direct quotations from the teachers' opinions when necessary. The determined themes are respectively "The creative drama competence of the study group", "The contributions of the study group's creative drama practices to Turkish language lessons and students", and "The contributions of the study group's creative drama practices to themselves".

## **FINDINGS and DISCUSSION**

In this section of the study, findings obtained from the interviews held with teachers after the practice are presented.

### **Study Group's Creative Drama Competencies**

According to the results obtained from the study, Turkish language teachers do not consider themselves to be in a good position regarding the implementation of creative drama as a method. It was determined that Turkish language teachers rated themselves 2.50 points on average (below the median) in the range of 1-7.

The statements of participants K5 and K38 are exemplary of this situation: *"I took a drama course while I was studying language, but it was not practice-oriented, so I never employed this course. I see myself as inadequate."*

Another example is the joint opinion of K22 and K47, who graduated from the same university, *"We took a drama course, but we took it in a plain and simple classroom. So, how can I employ drama now?"*.

In addition, two notable participants, K7 and K33, summarized their inadequacies regarding creative drama with the following sentence: *"The methods and techniques we used in our lessons were not directed towards drama, they were only theoretical. Therefore, I do not know how to apply it."*

K16 and K52 stated that they *"did not take creative drama as a course in their undergraduate education and did not receive any training even if they were curious about it."*

As can be seen, Turkish language teachers do not see themselves in a good position regarding the implementation of creative drama as a method.

### **What are the Opinions of Study Group Regarding Creative Drama (Contributions to Turkish lesson and to students)?**

According to the results obtained from the research, Turkish language teachers have positive views on the contribution of creative drama to Turkish lessons and their students.

K16, K17, K17, K28, and K48 stated that *"the use of drama in Turkish lessons is a necessity."*

K23, K46, and K58 also stated that *"creative drama developed them personally."*

Regarding teaching skills, K1, K9, K24, K32, and K46 stated that *"creative drama activities developed them professionally."*

Additionally, teachers such as K17, K21, and K35 stated that *"they can use creative drama as a method to develop positive emotions in their students."*

K13, K14, K26, and K41 regarded creative drama as an appropriate area for respect and self-confidence development.

Furthermore, teachers such as K6, K8, K16, K21, and K54 believed that their students had the competence to benefit from creative drama as a method to strengthen communication with others and support their emotions.

Finally, K2, K4, K11, K45, K49, and K51 stated that *"their students were introduced to many art forms through creative drama."*



## CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the research findings, Turkish language teachers do not see themselves in a good position regarding the application of creative drama as a method. However, their views on the contributions of creative drama to the Turkish lesson and their students are positive. Başçı and Gündoğdu (2011) found in their research with teacher candidates that creative drama develops empathy and self-confidence. Kasapoğlu (2019) expressed in his study that teacher candidates develop qualities such as tolerance and kindness through creative drama.

Freeman, Sullivan, and Fulton (2003) determined that creative drama studies have positive effects on the development of self-concept and social skills. Teachers see creative drama as an opportunity to develop their students' abilities in all branches of art, primarily in creativity, and stated that they could apply creative drama practices to their students in fields such as painting, music, sculpture, dance, and theater. Kereks and King (2010) stated that creative drama would support professional development in teacher training. Creative drama provides teacher candidates with positive feelings about their profession.

Hamurcu (2010) obtained the opinions of teacher candidates after the experimental study they conducted. According to the teacher candidates, creative drama practices provided them with positive qualities in professional terms. The results obtained are supportive of other research. In the study conducted by Erdoğan (2006), classroom teachers stated that they had problems with the method in creative drama practices in Turkish lessons. Similar results were found in other studies (Akkaya, 2012; Akyel & Çalıřkan, 2013; Ormancı & Şaşmaz, 2010).

Teachers stated that they could benefit from creative drama practices in group expression, developing communication skills, cooperation, developing positive relationships, collaboration, solidarity, accepting each other as they are, and creating sincere environments. In the study conducted by Kuşdemir Kayıran (2018) with teacher candidates, teacher candidates stated that they could use the creative drama method to improve their students' social skills and collaboration.

Bütün, Uzuner, and Duman (2015) described creative drama as a socializing method in their research with teacher candidates. Many previous studies have found that creative drama has positive effects on socialization. The results obtained are supportive of previous studies (Hasırcı, Bulut, & Saban, 2008). Teachers see creative drama as an opportunity to develop their students' abilities in all branches of art, primarily in creativity, and stated that they could apply creative drama practices to their students in fields such as painting, music, sculpture, dance, and theater. Baran Burçoğlu and Aykaç (2013) also reported that creative drama practices might offer ample opportunities for students to become intimate with art.

Based on these conclusions of the research, the following can be recommended:

- More work needs to be done with teachers regarding creative drama techniques and practicing creative drama.
- In-service training programs must be designed by making contact with the units of the Ministry of National Education where teachers work.

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