

The Role of Creative Drama on Prospective English Teachers' Academic Achievement

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Abstract

Creative drama is an improvisational form of drama created by participants based on their observations and experiences. It enhances imagination, communication and problem-solving skills. Thus, creative drama suits perfectly to the 21st century skills, helping learners develop four Cs; creativity, critical thinking, communication and collaboration which are of crucial importance for personal and professional achievement in today's society. The main objective of this quantitative study is to determine whether there is a relationship between creative drama and achievement in one of the most theoretical lessons of English Language Teaching (ELT) Department; "language acquisition". Accordingly, the paper discusses how creative drama can be implemented in order to increase the achievement of prospective teachers of English in "language acquisition" lessons. The sample of the study is composed of 66 second grade prospective English teachers of a state university. In the scope of this experimental study, control and experimental groups were formed randomly and six hour-lesson plans were prepared for these groups. Experimental groups were taught language acquisition lessons for two weeks via of creative drama; whereas, control groups used traditional teaching. An achievement test was prepared and its construct and content validity were investigated by the experts. This achievement test was administered as pre and post test to all groups. Findings indicated that creative drama has statistically significant positive effect on prospective English teachers' language acquisition lesson achievement.

Key Words: Creative drama, English Language Teaching (ELT), achievement, language acquisition

Introduction

The school of the future will, perhaps, not be a school as we understand it—with benches, blackboards, and a teacher's platform—it may be a theatre, a library, a museum, or a conversation. (Tolstoy cited in McCaslin, 2006:257)

Creative drama looks for a classroom Tolstoy describes, where there are no limits and students learn by experiencing. It changes ordinary experiences into important ones, which is a difficult thing to do (Heathcote, 1991). However this difficult thing may bring the excellence that some educationists look for. This paper has investigated whether creative drama can be efficient in teaching one of the most theoretical lessons in English language teaching department; language acquisition. It is assumed that creative drama can be helpful for prospective English language teachers in their education and in their career (Gryay, 2012). Creative drama is a process in which group members reflect their experiences, ideas, aims in the form of enactments by using techniques such as improvisation, role-playing etc. (Adigzel, 2010, Karakelle, 2009, McCaslin, 1990). In language teaching creative drama can be helpful to develop positive attitudes towards language because the student is invited to an enjoyable environment where active participation is required (ol, 2015)

Why Creative Drama?

San (1990) suggests that today there is always something such as a coursebook, teacher or media between the child and the world. This makes learning just cognitive, excluding experiences. Nonetheless, with creative drama, affective domain and imaginative world unite with cognitive skills. Therefore, creative drama rescues learning from being only cognitive and puts affective factors into play.

Heathcote (1991) suggests that drama ensures isolating an event or comparing one event with another, looking at events that have happened to other people in other places and times, or to look at one's own experience after the event, within the safety of knowing with just it is not happening. She adds "I will not guarantee that classes will work, what I will guarantee is that I will always keep the work interesting" (1991:90-94). Creative drama can be a way to make an exciting connection between reality and theory. It may help to bridge the gap between classroom and real life by providing insights into how to deal with tricky situations (Davies, 1990). It is effective in increasing creativity and imagination (Karakelle, 2009; McCaslin, 1990, Özdemir & Çakmak, 2008), self-reliance and self-esteem (Selcik & Oğuz, 2015); fluent and flexible thinking (Karakelle, 2009); aesthetic sensitivity and artistic viewpoint (Erem, 2015); empathy and social skills (Korukcu & Ersan & Arar, 2015; Yassa, 2006;), language development (McCaslin, 1990, Stewig, J.W. 1972). Besides, there is a connection between learning in drama and personality development (Yassa, 1999). Creative drama is also influential on cognitive and affective achievement (Adigüzel & Timuçin, 2010; Çalışkan & Üstündağ, 2010, Taşkın-Can, 2013). Ulubey and Toraman (2015) analyzed the effect of creative drama on students' achievement by gathering the experimental researches which investigated the effect of creative drama on students' achievement, and synthesized the findings of these researches and they concluded that creative drama method increased the students' academic achievement. Furthermore, creative drama can be devised effectively in ELT classrooms because students are motivated and relaxed, they use language for real purposes, students and teachers can approach sensitive topics and they can concentrate on pronunciation and retention (Burke and O'Sullivan cited in Wood Shand, J., 2008). It also suggests a unique opportunity to "enlarge the vocabulary, promote more audible speech and improve articulation" (McCaslin, 1990, p. 254). Because learners use English for specific purposes, language is more easily internalized and remembered. Drama provides the ultimate multi-sensory learning experience, it is inclusive and it supports the learning of a foreign language (Dervishaj, A., 2009).

Briefly, it has been stated that creative drama develops critical and creative thinking, linguistic, communicational, problem solving skills of the participants and helps them to develop self-efficacy, empathy, respect, and socialization subjects; increase their sensorial awareness, and help them to remember (Adigüzel 1994; McCaslin, 1990, Karakelle, 2009). Gavin Bolton (2010) asserts that there have been four types of drama teachers; the ones who emphasize content, the ones who promote drama for personal growth, third type who see drama as a means of social development, and the last kind who hold teaching about the dramatic art form as a priority. Because prospective teachers will perhaps take all of these objectives in the future, this study will analyze their relation with creative drama and whether this relation affects their success.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

It is assumed that creative drama may initiate communication, increase critical thinking and may be helpful in the academic achievement. Accordingly, this study aims at finding out whether creative drama is an effective method in teaching ELT candidates' language acquisition lesson. The research question is "Is there a significant difference between creative drama and achievement in language acquisition lessons?" Related to this main research question, sub-questions were asked, namely:

- R1:** Is there a significant difference between pre-test results of experimental and control groups?
- R2:** Is there a significant difference between pre-test and post-test results of the control group?
- R3:** Is there a significant difference between pre-test and post-test results of the experimental group?
- R4:** Is there a significant difference between post-test results of experimental and control groups?

This study is expected to make pre-service teachers learn their subject matter in a student-centered method; creative drama. They will comprehend the topic and learn about creative drama simultaneously. There is no research study about language acquisition lesson in ELT field in Turkey in which creative drama was used. Consequently, this study may be helpful in the field. This study will also be an example of using creative drama as a teaching method in language acquisition lessons.

Method

Participants

The research, which has a quasi-experimental design, had been carried out in ELT Department of Dokuz Eylül University in spring term of 2012-2013 academic year. All second year students who were taking language acquisition lesson participated in the study. Experimental and control groups were determined randomly. The total number of students decreased from 88 to 66 (Experimental group: 35, Control group: 31) because some of these students were not present at some stage of the experiment.

Content of the study

The content of the study was selected as factors affecting second language acquisition unit in language acquisition lesson of second graders in ELT department. The factors discussed were motivation, age, attitudes, aptitude, learner preferences, learner beliefs and intelligence. Two types of lesson plans were prepared for control and experimental groups separately. For experimental group the plans were prepared considering creative drama steps; preparation, enactment, evaluation and creative drama components such as drama techniques, dramatic moment, acting as if, teacher and student roles, group work, play-like processes, previous life experiences (Özdemir & Üstündağ, 2007). In the implementation of the target subject, in order to reduce the factors which can disturb the experiment, the researcher taught both of the groups. The treatment lasted two weeks, in total 6 lesson hours in each group.

Data Collection Tool: Achievement Test

In the scope of the study a multiple choice achievement test was developed for measuring “factors affecting second language acquisition” unit by the researcher. It was developed for learning outcomes reported in Higher Education Council (www.yok.gov.tr), ELT Department curriculum. The test evaluated knowledge related to factors affecting second language acquisition; such as motivation, age, attitudes, aptitude, learner preferences, learner beliefs and intelligence. Two English Language Teaching experts insured the validity of the test. Construct and content validity of the test were investigated by the experts; accordingly some items were eliminated and the last version of the test composed of 18 items. Inter-rater reliability was assessed by two different experts who checked the tests. The achievement test was administered as pre and post test to all groups. The test scores of both experimental and control groups were analyzed in order to define the effects of creative drama on achievement.

Results and Discussion

In this section the results related to the educational treatment will be given and each research question will be answered in detail.

Findings related to the first sub-question

Hypothesis 1: There is no statistically significant difference between pre-test results of control and experimental groups.

In order to measure this hypothesis, pre-test mean scores of both groups were analyzed by means of independent samples t-test. The results of this analysis are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. *Difference between Pre-test results of experimental and control groups according to group variance*

	Group	n	Mean	sd.	t	p
			(Max.Score=18)			
Pre-test Results	Experimental	35	8,71	2,30	,568	,572
	Control	31	9,03	2,22		

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

When the experimental and control groups were compared at pre-test by independent t-test (Table. 1), it was found that there was a non-significant difference between experimental and control groups. This

indicates that experimental group ($t = ,568$; $p = ,572$) were almost equal in their subject matter knowledge in second language acquisition lesson prior to the educational treatment.

Findings related to the second research question

Hypothesis 2: There is no statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test results of the control group.

The second hypothesis is analyzed by means of paired-samples t-test because the mean scores in these two tests belong to the same group (Büyüköztürk, 2002). In other words, these scores are closely related to each other.

Table 2. *Difference between Pre-test and Post-test results of control group*

Group	n	Mean	sd.	t	p
(Max.Score=18)					
Control Pre-test	31	9,03	2,22	-8,75	,000
Control Post-test	31	12,67	2,54		

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

As indicated in Table 2 the educational treatment with traditional teaching has also been successful, which is contrary to the 2nd hypothesis. Before teaching the subject control group's test score mean was 9, 03 and in post test it has been 12, 67, which is statistically significant. This finding shows that traditional, teacher-centered instruction was also highly beneficial for the students.

Findings related to the third sub-question

Hypothesis 3: There is statistically significant difference between pre-test and post-test results of the experimental group.

Table 3. *Difference between Pre-test and Post-test results of experimental group*

Group	n	Mean	sd.	t	p
(Max.Score=18)					
Experimental Pre-test	35	8,71	2,30	-11,95	,000
Experimental Post-test	35	13,57	1,81		

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

In order to evaluate third hypothesis, paired sample t-test was applied to the experimental group's test scores. As seen in table 3 below, experimental group students' mean score is 8, 71 in pre-test and 13, 57 in the post-test. Therefore, it is clear that experimental group's achievement on the subject matter has significantly increased with the use of creative drama method ($t = 11,95$, $p = ,000$). The finding related to third sub-question of the research is in parallel with the third hypothesis. This indicates that creative drama method has been effective in the teaching of language acquisition lesson in second grade students of ELT Department.

Findings related to the fourth research question

Hypothesis 4: There is statistically significant difference between post-test results of control and experimental groups in favour of the experimental group.

To compare the effectiveness of creative drama method, independent samples t-test was applied to the post-test mean scores of experimental and control groups, according to the group variable. Table 4 shows the results of this independent samples t-test.

Table 4. *Difference between post-test results of control and experimental groups*

Group	n	Mean	sd.	t	p
(Max.Score=18)					

Post-test	Experimental	35	13,57	1,81	
Results					1,65 ,103
	Control	31	12,67	2,54	

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

Table 4 indicates that there is a rise in both groups' mean scores in post-test. The results showed a non-significant difference between the control and experimental groups' mean scores in post test. Although the experimental group's mean score is higher than that of the control group in post test, this difference is not statistically significant ($t=1,65$, $p=,103$). This result may stem from the fact that creative drama was a new method for the students and they might not have enough time to get used it.

Conclusion and Suggestions

In this quasi-experimental study, the effect of creative drama was measured in the context of language acquisition lesson in second year programme of ELT Department. The pre-test results indicated that experimental and control groups were equal in their subject matter knowledge before the educational treatment. For two weeks, experimental group was taught with creative drama whereas control group was taught with traditional teacher-centered instruction. In the end of this six-hour-lesson period with the groups, achievement test was re-administered to all groups. The post test result of the experimental group was significantly higher than its pre-test result which proved the effectiveness of creative drama method in language acquisition lesson. This finding related to creative drama's positive effect on achievement is in parallel with several studies (Batdı & Batdı, 2015; Maranon, 1981; Planchat, 1994; Vitz, 1984; Wagner, 1998). In post-test a difference was observed between two groups' scores in favour of the experimental group. As a matter of fact, not only experimental group's achievement but also control group's achievement scores increased significantly. The experimental group had higher improvement than the control group after the treatment but this difference was not statistically significant. Creative drama activities enabled experimental group to gain a better learning of acquisition lesson than those of control group; however, this difference was not very high and statistically significant. This can be related to the fact that creative drama was a radical change for the students who were accustomed to teacher-centered approach.

It can be suggested that in further studies, creative drama method can be implemented in other lessons and for longer periods of time. This study only searched for its effect on achievement and some other variables such as, retention, creativity and attitudes can be tested. In conclusion, creative drama method is worth using in increasing the achievement of ELT students. It can be a path to success in their education and career as a teacher.

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