

**Identifying and Comparing The Attitudes of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th
Grade ELT Students Towards Drama Activities**

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Abstract

A large portion of the success in language learning depends on the specific classroom methodology chosen by the teacher. The most emphasized methods in the field of ELT are those which put the student in the centre and emphasize the real life like situations whereby students can use the language communicatively. Creative Drama has the potential of providing such opportunities. Students learn the language through game like procedures, by role-playing and simulating the real life. Creative drama activities are used in lessons at all levels in certain lessons in ELT department of Muğla University. The aim of this study is to find out in what ways the attitudes of ELT department students' attitudes towards drama as a method of instruction change throughout the four academic years. 125 of 216 students currently active in Muğla University ELT department have been reached and a questionnaire was applied to them. The dependent variable is the results from an attitude scale developed by the researcher while the independent variables are students' grade-levels and whether they have taken the drama lesson in the 3rd year or not. The results were analyzed descriptively. It was found that the attitudes of students towards drama are somewhat positive at all levels. This study showed that the students who had taken and passed drama have more positive attitudes than those who didn't. Junior students had the most positive attitudes and their attitudes were significantly different from those of the freshmen. The underlying reasons must be investigated by further study. Another questionnaire for the senior students can be developed or a series of semi-structured interviews can be held.

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İngilizce Öğretmenliği 1., 2., 3. ve 4. Sınıf Öğrencilerinin Drama Aktivitelerine Yönelik Tutumlarının Belirlenmesi ve Karşılaştırılması

Özet

Yaşadığımız çağ bir iletişim çağıdır diyebiliriz. Bu çağda insanların dil öğrenmesi son derece büyük bir önem arz etmektedir. Dil öğretiminde de en önemli eğilimlerin başını iletişimci yaklaşım (communicative approach) çekmektedir. Bu yaklaşıma göre dil öğrenen kişilerin sınıfta gerçek yaşamdakine benzer durumlar içinde dili 'kullanarak' öğrenmeleri öngörülmektedir. Bu tip deneyimleri sağlaması açısından drama etkinlikleri dil öğretimi alanında özel bir yere ve öneme sahiptir. Bu bakımdan İngilizce öğretecek öğretmenlerin bir yöntem olarak dramayı bilmeleri ve dramaya karşı olumlu bir tutum sergilemeleri önem taşımaktadır. Yaratıcı drama etkinlikleri Muğla Üniversitesinde dört yıl boyunca her seviyedeki sınıflarda bazı derslerde kullanılmaktadır. Bu araştırmanın amacı öğrencilerin drama etkinliklerine karşı tutumlarının bu dört yıl içinde değişip değişmediğini, eğer değişiyorsa ne yönde değiştiğini anlamaktır Muğla Üniversitesi İngilizce öğretmenliği bölümünde halen kayıtlı bulunan 216 öğrenciden 125'ine ulaşılmıştır. Araştırmacının kendisi tarafından geliştirilen bir tutum ölçeği kullanılarak öğretmen adaylarının bir yöntem olarak dramaya karşı tutumları araştırılmıştır. Birinci sınıftan dördüncü sınıfa kadar olan öğrencilerin tutum puanları karşılaştırılarak tartışılmıştır. Bulgulara göre tüm sınıflar için tutumlar olumlu yönde çıkmış olmakla birlikte programda drama dersinin yer aldığı üçüncü sınıftaki öğrencilerin tutumlarının anlamlı derecede daha yüksek olduğu gözlenmiştir. Bu araştırmanın sonuçları ışığında drama dersinin programdaki yeri ve süresi değerlendirilebilir. Ayrıca, dördüncü sınıf öğrencilerinin tutumlarının üçüncü sınıf öğrencilerinin tutumlarına göre daha düşük olması ileriki bir çalışmada incelenebilir.

Anahtar kelimeler: yaratıcı drama, İngilizce öğretmenliği, tutum

Introduction

A large portion of the success in language learning depends on the specific classroom methodology chosen by the teacher. The most emphasized methods in the field of ELT are those which put the student in the centre and emphasize the real life like situations whereby students can use the language communicatively. Creative Drama has the potential of

providing such opportunities. Students learn the language through game like procedures, by role-playing and simulating the real life.

Methods and procedures being central to the success of the teaching learning situations constitute a large part of the language teacher education programs. Drama has been accepted as valuable and begun to appear in ELT programs of Education Faculties as a separate lesson since drama was included in the primary and pre-school education programs in 1997 by the council of higher education in Turkey.

The choice of methods depends not only on what they have been taught at school. Another important factor that affects the choice is the teacher candidate's own experiences as a student. In this respect, the attitudes of the teacher-candidates towards creative drama as a teaching method become significant. How they perceive drama as a learning tool will have an important effect on their choice of whether to use it.

Teacher training programs in Turkey emphasize the methodology and the field knowledge most. The cognitive and psycho-motor domains of learning are addressed through lessons with explicit and specific focus on them. The affective domain however receives little or no attention. Just as the learners' learning of the language depends on using it in real-life like situations which are simulated in the classroom, the teachers need to try out classroom situations in order to develop their teaching skills. The practicum is designed for these purposes. Yet, this time - only a couple of terms - is insufficient for them to have a full experience. The presentations in methodology and approaches lessons can be used as an opportunity for the students to develop affective affiliation towards the proficiency. But these lessons are more focused on the cognitive and psycho-motor domains of learning. This caveat can be filled by introducing drama into these courses.

John Dewey had observed in the 1920s that "In the old educational system, the focus was on the teacher, on the course book, on anywhere the child and his inner instinctive activities do not exist... The changes we've been trying to make are also changing the focal point... The child is transforming into a sun around which all the educational applications evolve." (as cited in San, 2006) These words were correct for the American educational system. Meanwhile English educational system had been going through some changes. The jug and mug theories which see the child as an empty vessel to be filled with information began to be rejected beginning from 1970s and an understanding of a child-centred education had begun to set in. (San, 2006) In this environment, drama began to flourish as an effect of romanticism. (Adıgüzel, 2010)

Drama in Education stemmed from the new educational understanding that aims to make children aware of the socio-political characteristics of the era they are living in during 1950s and became known in Europe especially with efforts of Dorothy Heathcote's international workshops after 1950s. (Adigüzel, 2010).

Drama is an alternative way of teaching and learning which can make important changes to our educational system. Our educational system is often criticized for being highly transmissive and too dependent on memorization. (San, 2006:119) Drama helps children learn for themselves. It depends on experiencing rather than memorising. We can say drama is different at least in three ways. First, students learn through activity. This is in line with the latest educational views such as learning by doing. Students engage in active solution of given problems with their peers. This also helps them develop their communication skills and they become better group participants. Finally, drama helps students to form a global and social knowledge from information that seemed to be separate before. Participating in drama activities requires using all your resources. By this way, it becomes easier to associate different types of information and arrive at a synthesis during a drama activity.

Drama facilitates language learning. First of all, language learning is a matter of using it for real purposes. The old *Vocabulary + Essential Structures = Language* conviction has been challenged by many theorists. (Maley & Duff, 1982). Now it is a widely accepted fact that the context is as important as the vocabulary and structure. For example, a simple statement such as "It's eight o'clock" can be understood as an order (switch on the TV); warning (You'd better hurry up or you'll be late) or a persuasion (Don't you think it's time we left?) depending on the context. Drama activities are useful for creating information gap and real life like situations in which students can practice language. (Maley & Duff, 1982)

Drama takes the old situational approach one step further. Maley and Duff (1982) explain it with an example situation; "at the dentists" The traditional situational approach makes over-generalisations about what can be said at a dentists consulting room. At the dentists' it is certain that the patient's teeth will be mentioned. But the role of the dentist will change according to the patient. For example, the dentist will be reassuring with a nervous patient. He will try to be convincing if the patient is mistrustful whereas he has to become pacifying when confronted with an impatient one. Moreover, the available roles are not only that of the dentist's and the patient's. The dentist may also address the nurse for example. All these minute details in roles and setting can be reflected in drama activities. By

this way, students also learn about appropriateness as well as accuracy and fluency. (Maley & Duff, 1982)

Students become creative, productive; not only in the sense that they produce conventionally accepted and formatted outputs, but also in the sense that they can come up with new ideas and become devoid of any fears of innovation. They use their language better and they can be critical and evaluating towards the information being presented to them. They do not adhere to dogmas; they can handle taboo topics. (San, 2006:119) Such a powerful method needs to be made known to the teachers of the future. In addition, the saying "A school is as good as the teacher in it" should be kept in mind. (Kavcar, 2006:27) The success of the drama activity in bringing about such results depends largely on the teacher's success in implementing it. For this reason how teachers are trained becomes important. Teachers can become better drama leaders if they see good examples during their own education.

The conventional teacher training models are also compatible with drama. For example, reflective teaching requires observing oneself in action and reflecting on the experience critically. This practice to be observed can be provided by situations created through drama activities. Therefore we can say that drama is not only a method to be taught to teachers, but also it is a valuable method to be used in the actual training process.

Bozdoğan (2003) investigated whether there is a need to programme drama as a compulsory course in education faculties through a series of interviews with academicians from four different fields; English Language Teaching, Primary School Teaching, Preschool Teaching and Mathematics teaching. Two major results have been reached at; first the need to program drama as a compulsory course in education faculties and second participation in drama process leads to personal development.

Özdemir and Çakmak (2008) investigated the effect of drama education on prospective teachers' creativity. They found that students' creativity increased in terms of fluency, originality, elaboration, resistance to premature closure and abstractness of titles at the end of a 12 week drama course.

Attitudes towards drama have been investigated by many researchers in different fields. For example, Hamurcu (2009) looked at prospective primary school teachers' attitudes towards creative drama in İzmir Buca Faculty of Education. The data demonstrated that the attitudes of the students changed depending on some factors such as with which class they took the drama lesson and gender of the participants.

In a more recent study, Bertiz, Bahar and Yeğen (2010) looked at the attitudes of prospective science and technology teachers towards creative drama method. The results showed that the prospective teachers' attitudes tended to be positive. It was emphasized by the prospective teachers that drama is an important method providing the continuance and tangibility of issues in science and technology education.

Although attitudes of prospective teachers of other fields have been investigated, there is still need to look at the attitudes of English teacher candidates.

Problem of the study

Faculties of education are most often criticized for the learning-teaching procedures taking place in the lessons. This is only natural since these faculties are primarily interested in "learning processes". The teacher trainees studying at these faculties are encouraged to think on the nature of learning and teaching. They are given lectures about how people learn best. The notion "practicing what you preach" (Wallace, 1991) must be a characteristics of methodology lessons; it means that the lessons for teacher training must reflect the things being advised in the contents. In the same vein, if we desire the teacher candidates to use drama activities in their teaching, then our lessons must be streamlined with drama activities.

It can be assumed that people will have more positive attitudes towards methods which were useful for their own learning. It can be superfluous to expect students to think positively about what they know little about and what they have no practice in. On the contrary, every teacher teaches in the way they have learned. Thus, the only way of changing the teacher candidates' attitudes about this new methodology is exposing them more to use this methodology. Moreover, drama requires different teacher roles. The teacher has to dare to change the conventional, well-known sage on the stage for a director, facilitator, role model and a participant in most of the activities. The extra responsibility which using drama puts on the teachers' shoulder is well worth the outcomes. It is necessary for the teacher to experience those outcomes and understand the value of creative drama as a method and want to undertake those responsibilities.

The Purpose and significance of the Study

Creative drama activities are used in lessons at all levels in certain lessons in ELT department of Muğla University. The students learn through such activities in Reading and Writing I and II lessons during their first year,

then in Approaches I, II and Methodology I lessons during their second year; in Methodology II and Drama in ELT during the third year and in Materials Development in ELT lesson in the fourth year. The purpose of this study is to find out if and how the students' attitudes towards creative drama activities change throughout these four years. According to this, the hypotheses of the study are as follows;

1. The most positive attitudes will be of those who are in the fourth year of their education.
2. The attitudes of students will change positively especially after the Drama in ELT lesson in their third year. So, juniors and seniors will have more positive attitudes than freshmen and sophomores.
3. The attitudes towards drama will tend to be positive at all levels.

The knowledge from this study is significant in two ways. First of all, at which point the attitudes change most is a valuable piece of information in that the learning experiences can be re-designed according to this. By this way, it might be understood whether first hand experiences with drama change students' attitudes. If the results show that the attitudes tend to be negative towards drama, this is an important feedback for the educator, since a negative tendency means the techniques are not working as desired. This feedback can be used to develop the mentioned lessons further. Another advantage of having such information is that the results can be used as a basis for further study.

Assumptions and Limitations of the Study

It has not been investigated if the students come across with creative drama activities in other lessons. It is assumed that students' attitudes towards creative drama will be closely related to their encounters with it during the mentioned lessons. (Reading and Writing I, II; Approaches to ELT I, II; Methodology I,II; Drama in ELT and Materials Development in ELT)

One limitation of this study is that all the lessons but Drama in ELT lesson is given by the same instructor. Therefore, the students' attitudes might well be marked with their attitudes and feelings towards the instructor as a person.

Another limitation is related to the number of participants. In order to be able to make accurate statistical calculations, the participants must be at least 30 in number. But, the participants in some grade levels are less than 30. Therefore, the results from this study can be considered as only preliminary. The study needs to be replicated with a larger sample in further studies.

Research method

The aim of this study is to find out in what ways the attitudes of ELT department students' attitudes towards drama as a method of instruction change throughout years. The dependent variable is the results from an attitude scale developed by the researcher while the independent variables are students' grade-levels and whether they have taken the drama lesson in the 3rd year or not. The results were analyzed descriptively.

The information for the independent variables is collected via an information form which was given along with the attitude scale. Such questions as the participants' gender, their grade, and whether they have taken the drama lesson were asked to the participants in this part.

The attitude scale which was developed by the researcher consists of 40 items. The scale which consists of a single dimension includes 28 positive and 12 negative statements. In order to test the reliability of the scale, Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was calculated. The Alpha of the test was found .968. The scale has been prepared as a 5-point Likert-type scale and the positive statements were graded as 5-4-3-2-1 whereas the negative ones were graded as 1-2-3-4-5. The minimum point that can be taken from the scale is 40; the maximum, 200.

Participants

125 of 216 students currently active in Muğla University ELT department have been reached. 86 of the participants are females whereas 39 of them are males. The participant group consisted of 24 freshmen (1st grade), 19 sophomores (2nd grade), 48 juniors (3rd grade) and 34 seniors (4th grade).

Data Collection

The questionnaires were administered by the researcher in all levels. During the administration of the questionnaires, the participants were given some information about the structure of the questionnaire and how to fill in it. Participants' questions were answered by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The data from the questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS 17.0 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). The findings were presented as tables and discussed.

In order to find out if the attitudes of students towards drama activities changed according to their grade and according to whether they

have taken the drama lesson, 't-tests' and 'one dimensional variance tests' were used.

Findings and Discussion

The descriptive data related to the participants of the study has been presented in Table 1.

Table 1: *Descriptive Data Related to Participants*

		F	%
Gender	Female	86	68.8
	Male	39	31.2
Drama lesson background	Took and passed	69	55.2
	Has not taken yet	56	44.8
Grade	Freshman	24	19.2
	Sophomore	19	15.2
	Junior	48	38.4
	Senior	34	27.2
Total		125	100.0

Table 1 shows that 125 ELT students participated in the study. 86 of them were female whereas 39 of them were male. 69 students have taken and passed the drama lesson. 56 of them have not yet taken the drama lesson. In addition, the participant group consisted of 24 freshmen, 19 sophomores, 48 junior and 34 senior students.

The descriptive data related to the participants' point means from the attitude scale, the standard deviations, n values have been presented in Table 2.

Table 2: *Distribution of Participants' Attitudes According to Grade Levels*

SBS Point	\bar{X}	Ss	N
Freshman	149.40	14.69	20
Sophomore	152.40	19.39	15
Junior	164.55	16.69	38
Senior	159.04	24.18	28
Total	158.22	19.76	101

It can be seen in Table 2 that freshmen's attitude point means is (\bar{X}) 149.40, sophomores' attitude point means is (\bar{X}) 152.40, junior students' point means is (\bar{X}) 164.55, and senior students' attitude point means is (\bar{X}) 159.04. The maximum point that can be taken from the test is 200.

Considering the fact that the point means at all levels are around 150 points, it can be assumed that the third hypothesis of the study; "The attitudes towards drama will tend to be positive at all levels" has been verified. This finding is also consistent with the results of Bertiz, Bahar and Yeğen's study (2010) which looked at the attitudes of prospective science and technology teachers towards creative drama method. Their results also showed that the prospective teachers' attitudes tended to be positive. But the first hypothesis which said "The most positive attitudes will be of those who are in the fourth year of education" was not verified. Although the attitude point means of senior students were slightly higher than that of freshmen's and sophomores', the highest mean belongs to juniors. This may be explained by the fact that juniors have just taken the drama lesson and are still under strong influence of it.

The second hypothesis of the study was "The attitudes of students will change positively especially after the Drama in ELT lesson in their third year." In order to check this, the data was put through one way ANOVA analysis to see if the attitude points of students differ significantly across grade levels. The results are presented in Table 3.

Table 3: *One-way ANOVA Results of Attitudes According to Grade Levels*

SOURCE	KT	Sd	KO	F	P
SBS	3606.449	3	1202.150	3.289	.024
Error	35456.759	97	365.534		
Total	2567384.000	101			

As seen in Table 3, the attitudes of students towards drama differ significantly according to their grade levels. $F(3-97)=3.289$, $p<.05$.

In order to find out among which groups this significant difference is, tukey test was conducted and the results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: *Tukey Test Results of Attitudes According to Grade Levels*

(I) Grade	(J) Grade	Mean Difference (I-J)	p
Freshman	Sophomore	-3.0000	.968
	Junior	-15.1526*	.026
	Senior	-9.6357	.318
Sophomore	Junior	-12.1526	.165
	Senior	-6.6357	.700
Junior	Senior	5.5169	.654

*p<.05

Table 4 shows that the attitudes of junior students and freshmen differ significantly according to the results of the Tukey test. It is seen that freshmen's attitude point means is lower than the junior students' attitude point means. The value of the difference is significant at the level of (-15.15*) *p<.05.

Table 5 presents the results from the t-test related to students' attitude points according to whether they have taken the drama lesson or not.

Table 5: T-test Results of Attitudes According to Drama Background

Drama Background	N	\bar{X}	ss	t	p
Took and passed	56	162,6429	16,00617	2.580	.011
Has not taken yet	45	152,7111	22,61900		

As seen in the table, the attitudes of the students differ significantly according to their drama background. ($t=2.580$, $p<.05$) According to this result, those who have taken and passed the drama lesson have greater points than those who have not yet taken it. It can be concluded that the drama lesson which students take during their third year affects their attitude positively. Bozdoğan (2003) also asserted that participation in drama process led to personal development and there was a need to program drama as a compulsory course in education faculties. Therefore, this finding supports Bozdoğan's results.

Conclusion

In this study, the attitudes of 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade students at the ELT department of Muğla University have been compared. Two of the three hypotheses of the study were verified.

It was found that the attitudes of students towards drama are somewhat positive at all levels. Even the most conventional language teaching methods such as direct method and situational language teaching are based on conversation and dialogues. These naturally involve some roles. Language students are already familiar with taking over a new identity, and role-playing. These are also common to creative drama. Thus, it is not so difficult for a language learner to accept drama as an effective learning tool.

It had been hypothesized that the students' attitudes would become even more positive after they were given a detailed instruction as to how to use drama actively as a teaching and learning method. The ELT programme consists of a drama lesson in the 6th term. In this lesson, the students find

opportunities to gain first-hand experience of drama, and learn the learning theory that underlies drama. This study showed that the students who had taken and passed drama have more positive attitudes than those who have not yet taken it.

Yet another hypothesis was that seniors would have the most positive attitudes. The hypothesis was based on the assumption that as students become more self-confident in using different methods and techniques, they would be more eager to try more demanding activities in terms of teacher roles. Surprisingly enough, this hypothesis was not verified by the data. Junior students had the most positive attitudes and their attitudes were significantly different from those of the freshmen. This might be due to the effect of the practicum programme. The students might have been discouraged by the conditions in the schools they go for practicum.

The underlying reasons must be investigated by further study. Another questionnaire for the senior students can be developed or a series of semi-structured interviews can be held.

This study only compares the attitudes of students at different grade levels. Therefore, it does not necessarily mean that this finding depends on a change in attitudes for the negative. Maybe the seniors had even lower attitudes last year. In order to be able to draw a more reliable conclusion, this study can be repeated next year. This would make comparing attitudes before and after taking the drama lesson and the attitudes when the students are juniors and when they are seniors.

Finally, this research can be held in different schools and the results can be compared. By this way, the number of participants can allow for generalizations. Moreover, if it can be verified that other teachers do not use creative drama activities in the lessons of the first and the second year, the attitudes of freshmen and sophomores can be compared. This can make it possible to see the effect of the creative drama activities that the researcher uses at Muğla University on the students' attitudes towards drama.

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