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## Examining the Effect of Creative Writing Activities on Reading, Writing and Language Lesson Attitudes of Elementary School Fourth Grade Students

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**Abstract:** The aim of this research is to examine the effects of creative writing activities on the reading and writing attitudes of fourth grade students. This research is a one-group pretest-posttest design of quantitative research methods. The study population of the study is the fourth grade students who are studying in Sorgun district of Yozgat province in Turkey. Cluster sampling was used in the sampling selection. A total of 35 students are in the sample. Creative writing activities were realized for the students for two months. Mean, standard deviation, paired samples t-test were used in the analysis of the data. As a result of the research, creative writing activities led to an increase in reading, writing and language lesson attitude of elementary school fourth graders. Increase in language lesson attitude is significant. The mean increase in Turkish lesson attitude scores was .39 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 3.43 to 3.82. The effect size statistic ( $r=.32$ ) indicated a medium effect size.

**Keywords:** *Creative, writing, reading, language, elementary school.*

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### Introduction

The basic language skills are four: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Writing is generally developed later than other skills. In addition, writing skills are the most difficult to develop basic language skills. Unfortunately, today students do not like writing. Students reluctant and bored when writing activities. Creative writing activities are important for this reason. It is important that students are willing to write activities. In this research, firstly, creative writing is explained. Then the aim and importance of creative writing activities was emphasized.

Considering the historical development of creative writing, which is about eighty years (Temizkan, 2011, p. 920). Creative writing is a writing approach that aims at the students' participation in the writing process and for them to be more productive in writing activities. It is difficult to reach each of the students with different learning situations; but creative writing exercises enable students to initiate the writing process through fun (Kavcar, 2013, p.11). The creative writing process can be thought of as problem solving ability by individual approaches based on the experience, knowledge and attitudes of the authors (Temizkan, 2011, p. 920). It is unlikely to say that, apart from the students, the attitudes of adults, even those closely related to their mother tongue teaching, are at the level of their desire for writing (Turkel, 2013, p. 2). There are many factors that affect writing success. Strengthening the willingness of the learners to write cannot be explained only by the method used in the classroom. A strong desire to write is as important as the ability of the student to use writing skills. Having a positive desire for writing also requires a positive attitude towards writing (Kirmizi, 2009, p. 53). In the writing process, students can freely write in the way they want, away from any kind of pressure. In order to motivate and exemplify students, it is important for the teacher to participate in creative writing competencies. After the creative writing process, students should be allowed to share their products. This sharing can be done in such ways (Kaya, 2013, p. 91): reading the products in the class or group, sharing the ideas of the students with each other, exhibiting the products on the class clipboard. For the development of writing skills, it is first necessary for the student to enjoy with writing. This can be accomplished by creative and entertaining work on writing (Kirmizi, 2009, p. 54). Creative writing is based on the fact that the impressions obtained from the outside world are presented in a different presentation and in a unique way (Temizkan, 2011, p. 920). Creative writing is, in a sense, "able to write freely". Emotions are a form of writing that expresses thoughts, impressions and dreams. The aim

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is not to inform the reader, but to influence (Susar Kirmizi and Beydemir, 2012, p. 320). Creative writing activities put into motion the cognitive and affective behaviors of the individual in the writing process. Allowing the person to present his experiences, observations, emotions, dreams and thoughts in more original forms (Kavcar, 2013, p. 11).

Writing is one of the basic literacy skills that are taught to the students beginning by early years of primary education (Erdogan and Erdogan, 2012, p. 347). When writing is mentioned, it is meant being able to express feelings and thoughts in written form. The writing skill described as narrative is an activity that needs to use multidimensional, high-level thinking skills, and since the first grade of primary education. A significant share has been allocated for written instruction in mother tongue teaching programs. Especially, writing education in primary language courses are intensified (Turkel, 2013, p. 2). It is not possible to give students a desired level of writing ability, only to write tutorials. The important thing is that they have a positive attitude towards writing. The attitude seen as a summary of past experiences that determine the behavior of the individual can influence the intellectual formation of current or future behaviors (Susar Kirmizi and Beydemir, 2012, p. 322). It is possible to descend into children's inner world, subconscious through creative writing activities. It will be easier for them to put their emotions and thoughts. They cannot always share with everyone, everywhere, in an environment free from fear of judging and criticizing freely, without any pressure elements (Temizkan, 2010, p. 629). Students write in the creative writing process; in a social environment where the individual is not forced, emotional comfort is present; with the desire to write and curiosity; distant from anxiety and fear of criticism; without being under the pressure of the majority, writes freely (Susar Kirmizi and Beydemir, 2012, p. 321). One of the ways in which students can spend more time in difficult situations and in addition to enjoy writing is "creative writing". It is necessary for the rapidly developing and changing world to acquire creative writing skills effectively. So that the students can adapt, think more practically and creatively. Be able to express themselves better, and have different qualities from other individuals (Kaya, 2013, p. 90).

Students must have meaningful learning opportunities to write. All the elements in the learning process (teacher, content, curriculum, etc.) should encourage students to write creatively and create appropriate environments for the development of each student's creativity (Demir, 2013, p. 88). In creative writing activities, the aim is to prepare the students to develop their writing skills. They can express their knowledge in their own way and in a different way with creative writing (Gocer, 2010, p. 188). Creative writing is based on establishing interesting and fluid relationships between many thoughts and dreams (Temizkan, 2010, p. 628). At the same time, it is aimed to create a critical and creative point of view in the students. Enable them to produce new and different thoughts about the subject (Demir, 2013, p. 87). Creative writing is based on the presentation of impressions from the outside world in a different presentation. In creative writing, there are situations such as putting different thoughts in the imagination, catching the originality, writing fluently and liking, enjoying with writing, getting out of the standards (Temizkan, 2010, p. 638).

The creative writing activities will help students to express their ideas freely while gaining a habit of respecting and accepting other people's feelings and thoughts (Temizkan, 2010, p. 629). Improving children's imagination and creativity is always overlooked. The child who drowns between boring and meaningless rules is escaping from attempts to write (Kirmizi, 2009, p. 53). It is the creative writing activities to ensure that the most important aimed learners express emotions and thoughts in a unique, fluid and engaging manner. Rather than boring, repetitive, monotonous writings (Temizkan, 2010, p. 638).

In creative writing studies it is important to present the subjects that will attract the person. Their creativity is actuated by means of which they can use their imaginations (Kavcar, 2013, p. 12). Creative writing can be fictional (like poem, story, novel) or not (like experiment). Creative writing means to be able to write freely, but not to write it without a rule. Of course, the written product depends on the writing rules (Susar Kirmizi and Beydemir, 2012, p. 321). In creative writing studies, writing studies can be done about the type of poetry. By choosing a poem suitable for creative writing work, it is possible for students to change the words in the strings and create a new poem. Student will have the pleasure of creating a new product with content that he/she will create with words he/she chooses (Kavcar, 2013, p. 14). For example, students may be asked to write a letter to a roman hero or write a letter to him or her by selecting a historical personality (M. Kemal Atatürk, Einstein, Graham Bell). They may also be required to interview a TV series, theater player (Kavcar, 2013, p. 14). You can see creativity, imagination, observations, perceptions of the external world, experiences, fantastical objects (extraordinary things), and so on. It is expected that the writing products that come out with the creative writing activities. At the same time, students have to use the language in a creative way in the writings they make by using the listed sources and stimuli (Temizkan, 2010, p. 628). Through creative writing process will be ensured (Kavcar, 2013, p. 12):

- What kind of life will I have when I am 40 years old?
- What if there was sugar water instead of rain from the sky?
- If I were an animal, which animal would I be?
- We write a quote about the place you like the most about your face.
- Write a story in which there is an old man, bagels, bottles and leaves.

Creative writing not only enhances the individual's writing skills, but also affects his or her self-perception in a positive way. Creative writing studies help (Kavcar, 2013, p. 12):

- To define the self itself.
- To decide by thinking about life and people.
- Planning.
- To take action in the direction of these plans.
- Allows you to freely move your emotions and thoughts on a subject using your imagination.

The aim of this research is to examine the effects of creative writing activities on the reading, writing and Turkish lesson attitude of elementary school fourth graders. This research, conducted with primary school fourth grade students, is important in terms of examining the effect of creative writing activities on reading, writing and Turkish lesson attitude. With creative writing activities, writing attitudes of students have been studied extensively. However, there are a few studies (Akkaya & Susar Kirmizi, 2010; Tok & Kandemir, 2015) that examine the effect of creative writing activities on students' reading attitudes and Turkish language attitudes. In this respect, contribution to the field is considered to some extent.

### **Literature Review**

Various studies on creative writing activities have been done. One of these studies conducted by Kirmizi (2009), the following results were obtained in the study: There is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the final tests for writing attitude. A significant difference was found between the pre- and post-tests of the experiment group with regard to the writing attitude. Another research conducted by Turkel (2014) is in pre-test post-test control group trial model. At the end of the research, the attitudes of the students in the experimental group to the writing and the creative writing achievement were found to differ significantly from the control group. When content analysis for the teaching process in the experimental group was examined, it was determined that the students of the experimental group expressed that creative drama activities developed positive emotions such as interest, desire, appreciation for writing in them. In the study conducted by Temizkan (2011), a pre-test posttest control group model was used. As a result of the research, it was found that there was a significant difference in the number of students in the experimental group and the control group in the final test according to the story writing ability scale. Accordingly, creative writing activities are more effective than traditional writing education without improving story writing skills. In the study conducted by Demir (2013) survey model was used. As a result of the study, a positive, moderate and significant relationship was found between students' creative writing skills and writing self-efficacy perceptions. According to this result, students with high self-efficacy in writing generally have good creative writing skills. In the study conducted by Susar Kirmizi and Beydemir (2012), the writing studies made within the scope of the creative writing approach in the obtained data have a positive effect on the writing attitude. In the study conducted by Jampole (1990), on the creative writing, the high creative and imagery treatment subjects generally outscored other subjects on originality, story length, and use of sensory descriptions across time. Further, descriptive analyses showed that all groups emphasized story structure in their writings, as well as included more visual and kinesthetic descriptions. These findings support the premise that guided imagery can be used to effectively enhance gifted elementary students' creativity. In the study conducted by Vass (2007), a key finding was the centrality of emotions in the observed creative writing sessions.

### **Method**

#### *Research Model*

This research is a one-group pretest-posttest experiment design of quantitative research methods. In an experiment is aimed, test an idea (or practice or procedure) to determine whether it influences an outcome or dependent variable (Creswell, 2012, p. 295). In education, many experimental situations occur in which researchers need to use intact groups. Quasi-experiments include assignment, but not random assignment of participants to groups (Creswell, 2012, p. 309). This design—which the authors call the one-group pretest-posttest design—suffers from the possibility that some factors other than the independent variable might cause a change between the pretest and posttest results (Babbie, 2011, p. 255). The one-group pretest-posttest design is still widely used in educational research (Campbell and Stanley, 1963, p. 7).

#### *Sample*

The study population is the fourth grade students who are students in Sorgun district of Yozgat province in Turkey. The cluster sampling was used in the sampling selection (Ary, Jacobs and Sorensen, 2010, p. 154). The sample consists of two branches in a primary school located in the district center. These two branches are 4/A and 4/E. Demographic data of the sample are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Participants demographic characteristics

	f	%
<b>Branch</b>		
4/A	19	54
4/B	16	46
<b>Gender</b>		
Boy	14	40
Girl	21	60
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>100</b>

When Table 1 is examined, it is seen that in 4/A branch there are 19 students. There are 16 students in 4/B branch. 14 students are boys, 21 students are girls. A total of 35 students are in the sample.

### *Instruments*

Three data collection tools were used in the research. These are "reading attitude scale", "writing attitude scale" and "Turkish course attitude scale".

#### *Reading attitude scale*

Reading attitude scale, originally developed by McKenna and Kear (1990) and adapted to Turkish by Kocaaslan (2014). It was used to determine students' attitudes toward reading. The scale is organized in 20 items and in quadruple Likert style. The first ten items on the scale measure the attitude of reading for fun, while the other ten items measure the attitude toward academic reading. The answers given to the items consist of expressions such as "very happy", "slightly happy", "very upset", "somewhat sad". The highest score can be taken from the reading attitude scale is 80 and the minimum score is 20. Garfield also uses the visuals together with the expressions. Garfield visually assists the students in expressing the emotions that scale expressions are trying to express in body language. In this study, used "Keloglan" visuals instead of with scale expressions instead of Garfield visuals. "Keloglan" visuals will be more familiar with the elementary school age.

#### *Writing attitude scale*

Writing attitude scale developed by Graham, Berninger and Fan (2007) was used to determine students' attitudes toward writing. Writing attitude scale translated to Turkish by Yildiz and Kaman (2016). The scale consists of 7 items. The scale was first translated into English and the experts were supported in this regard. The final, validity and reliability studies were carried out by applying 75 students who were in the 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th and 6th grades. According to this, Yildiz and Kaman (2016) found that, the value of the scale was 0.74 and the Bartlett's test was significant ( $\chi^2 = 101,536$ ,  $sd = 10$ ,  $p < .01$ ). These values indicate that scale factor analysis (EFA) shows. The rotated basic components were subtracted from the scale after the 4th and 6th item operations as a result of the analysis. The 5-item scale was one-dimensional and the variance value of the scale was 53% and the Cronbach's alpha value was 0.77.

#### *Turkish Lesson Attitude Scale*

Turkish lesson attitude scale was developed by Topcuoglu Unal and Kose (2014). According to Topcuoglu Unal and Kose (2014), it was aimed at developing a reliable and valid attitude scale of material to measure the attitudes of middle school students towards Turkish lessons. The scale of 35 items was applied to the group of 251 students. According to Topcuoglu Unal and Kose (2014), the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin score is .909; Bartlett's Sphericity Test value [ $\chi^2 = 4046.967$ ;  $df=595$ ,  $p < .01$ ]. According to the results of factor and reliability analysis, 7 items with low factor value and 1 item with low total correlation and 1 item with low total correlation were eliminated. A 27-item Likert-type scale was developed from a 35-item draft scale after the analysis. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability scale of your scale was 914. It has been noted that there should not be more than one judgment/opinion/hearing on one matter. "I fully agree" (5) and "agree" (4) expressions for the positive items used in the scale; expressions of "never agree" (1) and "do not agree" (2) were used for negative items. For items that do not contain a positive or negative opinion, "undecided" (3) is used. Analyzes made in the final form of the scale show that the lowest score is 27. The highest score is 135.

#### *Data Collection Procedures*

Firstly, in October 2017, classroom teachers were informed about the process. Information about what creative writing is and what creative writing practices are. The data of the study were collected in November 2017. First, reading attitude scale, writing attitude scale and Turkish lesson attitude scale were applied to the students as pre-tests on November 1, 2017. Then, creative writing activities were realized for the students for two months. Examples of creative writings are: What kind of life will I have when I am 40 years old? What if there was sugar water instead of rain from

the skies? If I were an animal, which animal would I be? Twice a week, creative writing work was done. Lastly, on 29 December 2017 posttests were applied.

### Data Analysis

As a result of the application of reading, writing and Turkish lesson attitude scale, the obtained data were transferred to the computer first. Mean, standard deviation, paired samples t-test were used in the analysis of the data. SPSS 20 statistical package program was used in the analysis of the data.

The Shapiro-Wilk test was performed to look at whether the data will be analyzed by parametric testing or nonparametric testing. If the group size is small, Shapiro-Wilks test is applied (Buyukozturk, 2012, p. 42). The Shapiro-Wilk test is based on the same mean and standard deviation (Field, 2009, p. 144). As a result of Shapiro-Wilk test; reading attitude scale pretest scores,  $W_{(35)}=0.94$ ,  $p>.05$ , was non-significant. Reading attitude scale pretest scores,  $W_{(35)}=0.94$ ,  $p>.05$ , was non-significant. Writing attitude scale pretest scores,  $W_{(35)}=0.89$ ,  $p>.05$ , was non-significant. Turkish lesson attitude scale pre-test scores,  $W_{(35)}=0.98$ ,  $p>.05$ , was non-significant. Reading attitude scale posttest scores,  $W_{(35)}=0.95$ ,  $p>.05$ , was non-significant. Writing attitude scale posttest scores,  $W_{(35)}=0.91$ ,  $p>.05$ , was non-significant. Turkish lesson attitude scale posttest scores,  $W_{(35)}=0.97$ ,  $p>.05$ , was non-significant. As a result of the Shapiro-Wilk tests done, the score is normally distributed. If the test is non-significant ( $p>.05$ ) it tells us that the distribution of the sample is not significantly different from a normal distribution (Field, 2009, p. 144). For this reason, paired samples t-test was used for parametric tests.

The Bonferroni correction was used to reduce the chances of obtaining false-positive results when multiple pair wise tests are performed on a single set of data. Bonferroni adjustment used the alpha level to judge statistical significance. This involves setting a more stringent alpha level for each comparison, to keep the alpha across all the tests at a reasonable level. Can divide alpha level (.05) by the number of comparisons that you intend to make, and then use this new value as the required alpha level (Pallant, 2011, p. 209). For intend to make three comparisons the new alpha level would be .05 divided by 3, which equals .017.

### Findings

The paired samples t-test results are presented in Table 2 to examine the significant difference between reading attitude scale pre-test and post-test scores of the sample of creative writing activities.

Table 2. Reading attitude pretest-posttest scores paired samples t-test results

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	p
Reading attitude pretest scores	3,50	35	.33	.05	.17
Reading attitude posttest scores	3,56	35	.29	.49	

On average, participants reading attitude posttest scores ( $M=3.56$ ,  $SE=.49$ ) greater than to pre-test scores ( $M=3.50$ ,  $SE=.05$ ). This difference was not significant  $t_{(34)}=-1.39$ ,  $p>.017$ .

The paired samples t-test results are presented in Table 3 in order to examine the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the writing attitude scale of the sample in which the creative writing activities were performed.

Table 3. Writing attitude pretest-posttest scores paired samples t-test results

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	p
Writing attitude pretest scores	3,40	35	.55	.09	.57
Writing attitude posttest scores	3,44	35	.34	.05	

On average, participants writing attitude posttest scores ( $M=3.44$ ,  $SE=.05$ ) greater than to pretest scores ( $M=3.40$ ,  $SE=.09$ ). This difference was not significant  $t_{(34)}=-.56$ ,  $p>.017$ .

The paired samples t-test results are presented in Table 4 to examine the significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of the Turkish lesson attitude scale of the sample in which the creative writing activities were performed.

Table 4. Turkish lesson attitude pretest-posttest scores paired samples t-test

	Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	p
Turkish lesson attitude pretest scores	3,43	35	.57	.09	.000
Turkish lesson attitude posttest scores	3,82	35	.45	.07	

On average, participants Turkish lesson attitude posttest scores ( $M=3.82$ ,  $SE=.07$ ) greater than Turkish lesson attitude pretest scores ( $M=3.43$ ,  $SE=.09$ ). This difference was significant  $t_{(34)} = -4.01$ ,  $p < .017$ . The mean, increase in Turkish lesson attitudes scores was .39 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 3.43 to 3.82. The effect size statistic ( $r=.32$ ) indicated a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988, pp. 284–287).

### Discussion and Conclusion

As a result of the research, the following results were obtained:

- Creative writing activities led to an increase in the reading attitude of elementary school fourth graders. However, this increase in reading attitude is not significant.
- Creative writing activities led to an increase in the writing attitude of elementary school fourth graders. However, this increase in writing attitude is not significant.
- Creative writing activities led to an increase in the language lesson attitude of elementary school fourth graders. And this increase in language lesson attitude is significant.

It is found that participants reading attitude posttest scores greater than pretest scores. This difference was not significant. In the primary grades, most children develop the attitude that reading is something to be valued. Some develop a preference for reading over other school activities. A few develop a real commitment to reading. Reading as a value develops from the accumulation of many experiences over a long period of time. Accumulated experience produces many values that each individual must organize into a personal value hierarchy (Maggart and Zintz, 1992, p. 61). When young children, or students of any age, are just beginning to read, it is very important that they see and understand the magic, thrill, and pleasure of the speech-print connection—that those funny little black squiggles are speech words that can be written down and read back exactly again. One of the best ways to do this is to have the students dictate their own stories and have someone write down exactly what they say (Rowell and Goodkind, 1982, p. 9). Current psycholinguistic theory has significantly changed reading methodology and textbook planning in the past two decades. The emphasis has been on whole language, comprehension, a schematic organization of thinking, language/environment relationships, and child-centered interests, attitudes, and motives (Maggart and Zintz, 1992, p. 72).

It is found that participants writing attitude posttest scores greater than to pretest scores. This difference was not significant. On the other hand, in the study conducted by Kirmizi (2009) there is a significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the final tests in favor of the experimental group with respect to the writing attitude. A significant difference was found between the pre- and post-tests of the experiment group with regard to the writing attitude. The study results' conducted by Kirmizi (2009) do not support this study. Because the current research result is not significant. As a result of the research conducted by Turkel (2014), the attitudes of the students in the experimental group to writing and creative writing achievement were found to differ significantly from the control group. When content analysis for the teaching process in the experimental group was examined, it was determined that the students of the experimental group expressed that creative drama activities developed positive emotions such as interest, desire, appreciation for writing in them. As a result of the research conducted by Temizkan (2011), it was determined that creative writing activities are more effective than traditional writing education without improving story writing skills. As a result of the study conducted by Demir (2013) with the eighth grade primary school students, a positive, moderate and meaningful relationship was found between students' creative writing skills and writing self-efficacy perceptions. According to this result, students with high self-efficacy in writing generally have good creative writing skills. Susar Kirmizi and Beydemir (2012) examined the effect of creative writing approach on writing attitudes in the fifth grade Turkish lesson of primary education. There was a significant difference between pre- and post-test measurements of the experimental and control groups. Jampole (1990) stated that, on the creative writing, the high creative and imagery treatment subjects generally outscored other subjects on originality, story length, and use of sensory descriptions across time. When the related researches are examined, it is understood that creative writing studies have a significant change in students' writing attitude. However, there is no significant difference in the results of the current research.

It is found that participants Turkish lesson attitude posttest scores greater than pretest scores. This difference was significant. The mean increase in Turkish lesson attitudes scores was .39 with a 95% confidence interval ranging from 3.43 to 3.82. The effect size statistic indicated a medium effect size. The central idea was to provide “enriched and direct experiences” through oral dramatization and creative writing in a content-oriented unit, which often related to the child's own experiences (Ruddell and Ruddell, 1995, p. 374). This study results' supports present study. The students' language course attitude increases are significant.

Creative writing activities led to an increase in the reading attitude of elementary school fourth graders. However, this increase in reading attitude is not significant. Creative writing activities led to an increase in the writing attitude of elementary school fourth graders. However, this increase in writing attenuation is not significant. Creative writing activities led to an increase in the language lesson attitude of elementary school fourth graders. And this increase in language lesson attenuation is significant. Within the scope of the research results, the following suggestions were

made: Creative writing activities have increased the attitude of native language teaching. For this reason, creative writing activities should be more utilized in the lessons of mother tongue teaching. And also for future research, creative writing can be use foreign language teaching (Morgan, 2007). In this research, creative writing activities were carried out with the fourth grade students in the primary school. For further research, it might be suggested that similar studies can be carried in the primary school with different grades, junior high school, high school or university students. In this research, creative writing activities were applied in native language lessons. The effects of creative writing activities in lessons such as mathematics and social studies can be examined through research studies. This research was carried out in Turkey. Efforts in different countries can be also examined.

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