Leading Level of Turkish Language Teachers to Students for Creative Activities: A Phenomenological Approach

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Abstract

This research has been carried out to determine leading level of Turkish language teachers to their students for creative activities. Qualitative research method; among research designs, phenomenology technique has been used in the study. Data of the research have been collected via face-to-face conversations with Turkish language teachers. Content analysis has been applied to interview records on the purpose of data evaluation. Among content analysis types, categorical data analysis has been chosen. Categories have been formed after coding the data and the findings have been interpreted. Our results concluded that; Turkish language teachers accept some activities, included in the lecture books, as useful. These activities are particularly the ones releated to reading and writing, filling the blanks in a text, completing a poem or an essay, composing a story by visual reading of some given images, creative drama, composition exercises, painting according to a given story, speaking by choosen words from a concept pool, writing based upon the sensations. The teachers, on the other hand, principally canalize their students to brain storming, creative writing and creative speaking activities. Noise in the classroom is the mostly encountered problem during these implementations. Some suggestions to facilitate teachers' leading level for creative activities, have been revealed according to the results of our study.

Keywords: Turkish language teacher, phenomenological, creative activity

Creativity is one of the general thinking abilities formed by the union of process and product, to see the things that nobody can see, hear or think, and to be courageous for the things that nobody can dare (Erdogdu, 2006; Ustundag, 2003). Jones described creativity as a total of originality, sensitivity and elasticity in ideas that give individual, and probably the others, power to break the chains and get out of ordinary by using different and productive thinking (see Canel, 1993).

Aslan (1994) described creativity as a cognitive talent of an individual, using intelligence elements in an original and product-oriented way including specific problem solving processes to reveal a new, original and skill-based product (See Sonmaz, 2002).

The first scientific studies on creativity began in the 1960s and developed in three different directions: describing creative individual or character, factors improving or preventing creativity, and transferring creativity into educational programmes to raise creative individuals (Sungur, 1997).

Binbasıoglu (2003) pointed that creativity is not an intelligence-dependent talent. Some of the students, who were successful in examinations and had high level results in intelligence tests, could not produce original and groundbreaking ideas in various branches (San, 1985). Wrong ideas, emphasizing that creativity was an inherent character and it could not be acquired, have been left in recent years. It may be true that creativity is an inherent character, however individual creativity may be proportionally increased with some factors such as intelligence, talent, education, and environment (Dogan, 2007).

Everybody has creativity without exception. However, due to routine educational behaviors to which school children are subordinated throughout their school years as well as technical and occupational training in the following years of life, creativity is suppressed clearly to improve other skills. In other words, educational system puts obstacles impeding students' creativity in an irrational manner (Rawlinson, 1995).

One of the most important social responsibilities of education is considered to enhance individual perception and understanding of national problems as well as the potential to create solutions for them, that's why it is very important to improve students' creativity level. Therefore, creativity can be described as the fundamental of development and progression (Binbasıoglu, 2003).

Developing students' creativity is closely related to the program at the school, teaching methods and techniques. However, in our country, the students are not included in educational

process in a creativity-oriented manner and this is the main problem of creative education (Ozdil, 1979). Primary aim of the education, as it is mentioned in the second part of National Basic Education Law, is to bring up constructive, creative and productive individuals. Even so, students' creative thinking abilities cannot be improved in desired levels.

Constructivist (student-centered) educational approach mainly concerned to 'how does individual learn?' rather than 'what must be taught' (Koc & Demirel, 2008). Constructivist approach puts the student into the center of education process in every field from preparing stage to the moment of realization. Therefore, it forms an active learning process for the students. In this context, theories of constructivism are completely different from traditional knowledge. (Ozerbas, 2007). Constructivism or student-centered education primarily concentrates on the aims of high level thinking skills and takes into account the needs of students.

Creativity is one of the basic talents that is aimed to be improved for students in the new Primary School Turkish Language Teaching Program (2005). The four basic language skills, in this program, are predicted to be developed as supporting of creative thinking. In this context, the aim of this study is to determine leading level of Turkish language teachers, working in primary school second level, to their students for creative activities.

Method

Research model

This study has been carried out to determine leading level of Turkish language teachers to their students for creative activities. Qualitative research method; among research designs, phenomenology technique (Yildirim & Simsek, 2005) has been used in the study.

Study group

Data sources in phenomenological researches are the groups or individuals who live or can express the case on which the study focused. Study group is determined according to observations and conversations. It is natural that the study group is limited in this kind of researches, because it needs long time face to face conversations (Yildirim & Simsek, 2005). Maximum variety sampling method, as one of the purposive sampling methods (Punch, 2005), has been used for this study. This method aims to create a relatively small sample group and to reflect the maximum variety of individuals who can be side with the studied

problem (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Study group of the research was composed of fifteen Turkish Language Teachers who were from different socio-economic level and working at te second level of primary school (6-7-8th classes). Eight female, seven male teachers were included in this study.

Data collecting tool

The findings that were important to facilitate teachers work on leading their students for creative activities, were questioned in the study. The interview form was prepared by the researcher and composed of the questions which were checked by three faculty members in the aspect of content validity. Ten open-ended questions to constitute an interview form under the expert supervision, were asked in a semi-constructed manner. In this study, validity was achieved by obtaining codes and categories by one-to-one quote from teacher interviews (Patton, 1987). In addition to the literature, concepts emerging in findings were also effective in determination of the codes and categories. Reliability was established in transforming raw data into the codes and categories, as performed by two authors.

Process

Qualitative data of this study, based on the data of interview forms, were obtained by voice recording devices. Then, voice recordings were transferred into written data and analyzed in consideration with the codes and categories. Content analysis has been applied to interview records on the purpose of data evaluation. Among content analysis types, categorical data analysis has been chosen (Tavsancil and Aslan, 2001). Data were coded first in the categorical analysis. Codes, the symbols used to classify or subgroup the word groups, are the concepts related to research (Robson, 2001). Categories (themes) which were explaining the codes in general level, were determined and results were interpreted. Nine categories were determined according to the results.

Findings

Adaptation status of Turkish Language Teachers to student-centered educational approach

Most of the teachers reported that they became surfeited with student-centered educational approach during their collage years: "I have attended seminar programs organized by National Ministry of Education. Lectures and exercises according to continuous student-centered modern educational system has already been applied to us during university

education. However, I can say that I improved in student-centered education more by the time I spent in classroom.''

Exercises in lecture books to improve creative talents of students, that are found to be effective by Turkish Language Teachers

Teachers mentioned that most of the exercises in lecture books were not permanent but writing exercises were more permanent: "I believe that most exercises are not beneficial for students. Especially the grammar exercises are very ineffective. For instance, text fulfilling exercises, writing story, poem or fable, dialog creation and role playing with friend groups.''

Exercises that are important to be included in student improvement files according to Turkish Language Teachers

Most of the teachers pointed that they took benefit of students' personal improvement files but this could be applied only with desirous students. They concluded that original works could be done by using the students' personal improvement files for the aim of developing creative thinking. "Yes, I take benefit of it, especially I want my students to keep their own original works.''

Information level and ideas of Turkish Language Teachers on creative thinking approach which is included in new curriculum

Most of the teachers reported that they had attended seminars and arranged sub-branch meetings to be able to accommodate with new educational methods. They also referred to guide books by using the compact discs which were sent by National Ministry of Education. Some of the teachers mentioned that they referred to internet as well as lecture books: "We have attended orientation seminars on the new curriculum."

Turkish language teachers accepted some exercises included in the lecture books, as useful. These exercises were particularly the ones related to reading and writing, filling the blanks in a text, completing a poem or an essay, composing a story by visual reading of some given images, creative drama, composition exercises, painting according to a given story, speaking by chosen words from a concept pool, writing based upon the sensations: "There are some exercises in workbooks to improve students' creative thinking skills. I think that story

composing, filling the blanks in a given story or painting according to a given story are the useful ones."

Teachers generally believe that exercises in lecture books are not efficient to improve students' creative talents:"I do not find most of the exercises useful for my students. Especially the grammar studies are ineffective. Only some of the writing exercises create interest. I think that vocabulary exercises may be useful if they become more attractive.''

Materials which are used by Turkish Language Teachers for referring their students to creative activities

Teachers mentioned that, in addition to lecture books, they took also benefits of worksheets, internet, poem or story books, different paintings, cartoons: "I, for instance, used environment; wanted the students to collect foreign words from billboards and this was a chance to see language degeneration on their own."

Most of the teachers pointed that they took benefit of students' personal improvement files including exercises useful for developing creative skills and self-expression: "I use these files. I keep files for myself and promote students to have their own files."

Some teachers reported that they also use educational websites: "I make searches in websites by membership. Students favor crossword-like exercises. I apply game-like activities by using the digital projector lamp as well as lectures by the help of digital presentations.''

The way that Turkish Language Teachers prefer to achieve their students discover creative exercises according to their perception

Teachers generally use mark as a reward and also the result of students' performances. Other then lecture mark, for the students' creative ideas, teachers additionally use verbal rewarding or rewarding activities like taking them to cinema: "It changes depending on the activity. I use lecture mark, if it is a difficult and important activity. I generally choose verbal rewards like 'well done, very good' whereas in some activities I prefer eats. I also give them some symbolic rewards as plus mark, highest mark and a plus.'' "It may change according to the class but generally I use marks as rewarding system."

When teachers set the students free for creative activities, major problem is noise in the classroom. They generally apply the rules which they decided previously to control and

proctorize the class: "Noise is one of the most common problems. That's why it is very important to decide rules and preventions previously to avoid losing control in the class."

Half of the teachers say that they take benefit of personal student improvement files as a method of achieving their students discover creative exercises. "Yes, I take benefit of it, especially I want my students to keep their own original works.'' However the other half of the teachers does not prefer using student improvement files.

Opinions of Turkish Language Teachers about the students who cannot orient on creative activities

Teachers confess that they may not apply activities according to all students' differing interests and talents but also mention that they try achieving their best about this. Crowded classrooms and inadequate time are the main reasons of this situation according to teachers: "Student number in the classroom and the time are the key factors… Because of not having enough time we cannot have chance to apply different activities."

Teachers agree that the students should be freed in the classroom to improve their creative thinking abilities, but disciplinary problems may be faced from time to time. Group studies or class-specific rules may be needed to establish co-ordination with the students. "I do not put maladjusted students in the same group as a disciplinary caution. I also try to separate them in the classroom.'', "…students identify their rules at the first lesson, I make some additions and we stick a list on the clipboard. They feel obligation to obey the rules because of promising.''

Activities guiding students to discover their different interests and talents

Teachers agree on inadequate time for the activities to drive students discover their different interests and talents. They mentioned that such kind of activities may be achieved if enough time and mandatory materials are supplied: "Circumstances of the school I work in, effect of social environment, inadequate consultancy are the reasons why students cannot discover their interests and talents. However, writing poetry in Turkish lectures, composition sessions, oral presentations are some of the verbal and written activities providing chance to discover students' different interests and talents.''

Different methods of teachers to intensify creative exercises

Teachers said that they often use brain-storming method. They concluded the effects such as most of the students take speaking opportunity, improving practical thinking abilities, driving students to find out original ideas: "Yes, brain-storming is one of the mostly used methods. Finding practical solutions for sudden onset problems supplies opportunity for measuring practical thinking ability of the students."

Teachers occasionally use creative writing exercises. They concluded the effects as improving imaginary capacity and self-expression talents of the students: "I believe that these exercises improve students' self-expression capacity."

Creative speaking is also one of the methods. Teachers mentioned that creative speaking exercises provide learning to speak in front of a crowd and relaxation of introverted students when the eyes upon them: "Effects of these, as I mentioned, are important to make children more free to express themselves in a crowd and the reflections on their family life and social relations may be dramatic."

Teachers try to use writing exercises related to sense organs. They summarize the effects as improving students' self-awareness level as well as improving expression of their feelings in right ways: "These are useful exercises which primarily increase students' self-awareness level and express them more easily in right ways.''

There are students who like writing poetries and stories but generally they prefer writing poetries.

Teachers mentioned that they try much to encourage their students to join competitions of story and poetry writing: "We encourage them as much as we can."

Most of the teachers use verbal rewarding and also good marks: "I always prefer verbal rewarding because I believe that it is the most effective method. Additionally, for the ones achieving high marks or producing original works, I reward them also with books, movie DVDs or chocolate.''

Discussion

Individuals who think extraordinarily creative should naturally have different qualifications with respect to a standard person. Creative individual's character consists of curiosity at first, as well as patience, talent to discover, ability of thinking by images, and

ability to make decisions by synthesis. (San, See; Ustundag, 2003). Individuals who think in a creative manner are more flexible in mind, so they can adapt to new conditions more easily. They are more careful, more observant and able to recognize quickly what is valuable for the others. Furthermore, creative individuals are more sensitive and harmonious with their natural environment. They are generally self-esteemed and sure of themselves (Carin and Sund'dan See; Erdogdu, 2006)

Creative individuals make life easier for themselves and the other people by finding specific and precise solution to problems. Karayağmurlu (1993) mentioned that increasing creative individuals ratio in the population, in other words uncovering or improving creativity talent, may only be possible by education.

When we look at the basic features of traditional educational applications some critical points draw attention. "Teaching approach that is mainly concentrated on transferring information, excessive dependence on lecture books, absolute dominance of teachers, applications that canalize students to only listen or observe instead of taking part in investigation, classroom conditions which are not suitable to creative thinking or explaining self ideas, teaching methods which do not allow understanding to make different comments are the primary notable points" (Iplikci, 2006).

According to the findings of this study, Turkish language teachers accept some activities related to creative thinking and included in the lecture books, as useful. These activities are particularly the ones related to reading and writing, filling the blanks in a text, completing a poem or an essay, composing a story by visual reading of some given images, creative drama, composition exercises, painting according to a given story, speaking by chosen words from a concept pool, writing based upon the sensations.

Our study revealed that teachers use initiative for creative activities, principally to canalize their students to some activities as brain storming, creative writing and creative speaking, writing based upon basic senses.

According to our study's findings, teachers mentioned that they cannot have chance to make different activities based on the students' interests and talents although, they try to do best. Teachers, as a reason about not to make enough creative activities, complained that classrooms were overcrowded and time was inadequate. In a previous study questioning the applicability of the Primary School Turkish Lecture Program in crowded classrooms, Yaman (2009) reported that most of the Teachers said they had problems in lectures and suggested

group studies to decrease negative effects of crowd. Findings of the above named study correlate with this study and thus, it is obviously seen that activities and exercises in Turkish lesson student workbooks necessitate to be revised in the aspect of creating feature of group consciousness.

This study questions leading level of Turkish Language Teachers to students for creative activities according to teachers' perception and repeating this study by qualitative observations in the classrooms may be suggested to further researchers.

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