

## **Turkish Teachers' Opinions about the Use of Drama Method**

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### **Abstract**

The purpose of the current study is to determine how Turkish teachers use the drama method in their classes and what difficulties/problems they experience during their implementations of the drama method. This is a qualitative study. The study employed the case study design. The study group of the current research is comprised of 17 Turkish teachers working in the city of Kars. The participating teachers were selected by using the maximum variation sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods. In the current study, a semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection tool. The collected data were analyzed by means of the content analysis method. The findings of the current study have revealed that the participating teachers mainly define drama as acting out and empathy development. They use the drama method most in the warm-up and wrap-up sections of the lesson, while studying texts including four basic language skills and didactic and critical texts, theatrical texts, and tales, folktales and fables. The drama method is believed to make its greatest contribution to the development of the skill of establishing empathy and the most important difficulty encountered is related to preparedness of students. The suggestion made by most of the teachers is to make drama a separate course.

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## INTRODUCTION

Frequent use of the drama method in a school environment where the main focus is on learning by doing and on student-centered teaching rather than teacher-centered teaching and students are allowed to engage in activities rather than listening to a teacher lecturing can increase the efficiency of learning-teaching process. By nature, the child acquires the best and permanent learning through games. Games can be played alone or in groups. Adıgüzel (2006: 23) defined creative drama as a way of acting out and making sense of an experience or an event by adding something from individuals' own experiences within a group work. Through creative drama activities, students not only learn but also socialize, enhance their self-confidence and nurture self-esteem and respect to others. They develop independent and democratic attitudes. Creative drama can be incorporated into courses at every level of formal education as a method of instruction and can be offered to students as an area of interest in itself (San, 1992).

“Creative drama has features that can realize a holistic learning, facilitates the simultaneous realization of cognitive, affective and kinesthetic development and is made up of practices through which learning occurs experientially” (Adıgüzel, 2013, p.54-55).

Adıgüzel (2010) defines the goals of creative drama as follows:

- Promoting creativity and imagination.
- Developing self-recognition, self-actualization and communication skills.
- Developing democratic attitudes and behaviors.
- Developing aesthetic behaviors.
- Developing critical and independent thinking skill.
- Developing cooperation-collaboration skill.
- Creating social sensitivity.
- Teaching how to release and control feelings.
- Contributing to language development and to the development of verbal and non-verbal expression skill (Adıgüzel, 2010).

The Turkish Course Curriculum is structured in such a way as to include knowledge, skills and values in an integrated manner so that it can enable students to acquire language skills related to listening, speaking, reading and writing and cognitive skills that they will use throughout their lives, to use these skills to develop themselves personally and socially, to communicate effectively and to develop the habit of reading and writing willingly with the love of Turkish. The Turkish Course Curriculum considers the development of language skills and competences as a pre-requisite for learning in all other areas, personal and social development and the acquisition of professional skills (MEB, 2018). In line with these objectives set in the Turkish curriculum, it is necessary to create settings in the classroom environment where students can develop themselves socially and academically, express themselves freely, acquire four basic language skills, relate these skills to the real life and develop these skills continuously. For students to actively participate in lessons and to be successful, they need to be provided with opportunities to learn by doing and experiencing. The drama method is an important method for students to express themselves well, to be a good listener, to produce solutions in the face of questions and problems and to have empathy. According to Aytas (2008: 15), creative drama is one of the most effective teaching methods because it stimulates more

than one emotion. Especially in Turkish classes, it is necessary to apply creative drama to develop language skills and to make comprehension and expression more effective.

Given that Turkish course is a skill course and skill is gained through practice and experience, it becomes clear that the methods and techniques to be used in Turkish course should make the student effective and active and that it is not possible to reach the determined targets unless these methods and techniques are implemented (Aktaş, 2006).

Aykaç (2011) stated that the activities conducted in the creative drama process enable students to use their language skills by placing them to the center. Again, Aykaç stated that students can participate effectively in the lesson through the use of creative drama method, and that with the creative drama activities based on the works of children's literature, it is possible to educate versatile individuals who can speak, write, investigate, question and critically think.

Şimşek et al. (2010) stated that the methods and applications that can teach students the usage of grammar subjects in Turkish classes in a permanent way should be used in Turkish teaching rather than the methods and applications focusing on the theory of the use of phoneme-letters, words and sentences. They also stated that the applications to be performed to make students internalize grammar rules and teach students their usage should be play-based so that that they can appeal to the interests of students and when such play-based activities are used as an instructional tool, the resulting learning can be more permanent. Without doubt, play is a tool through which the child can learn, create, experience, communicate and prepare for adulthood.

According to Maden (2010), the Turkish teacher should transmit his / her subject knowledge to the student with appropriate techniques within games. During the act of drama, a relationship should be established with other fields, attention should be paid to verbal expression and, if necessary, time should be devoted to various sound studies in social children's games. The Turkish teacher should give importance to the process of drama as a leader and value students' opinions and criticisms about games. The child should not be fully committed to the teacher directives in the course. A free environment should be provided. Such opportunities can only be provided by the drama methods and techniques for the Turkish teacher in the teaching process of Turkish.

During the drama process, participants perform activities to promote their language skills in a comfortable and free environment. There are also elements like curiosity and excitement involved in the process. In this process, different activities directed to the development of cognitive, affective and kinesthetic areas are performed. Participants both learn and have fun during the drama process (Bruce & Eryaman, 2015). The different experiences they are engaged in have a positive effect on their affective development. These features of the drama process increase the interest and desires of participants towards language skills (Erdoğan, 2016).

In empirical studies focusing on the use of drama in Turkish teaching, Şimşek, Topal, Maden and Şahin (2010), Kara (2010), Karateke (2006), Ünsal (2005), Köklü (2003), Çebi (1996) concluded that drama is more effective in teaching language skills than the traditional methods.

Turkish teachers can use the drama methods and techniques in their classes as they allow their students to learn by doing and experiencing, to convert their behaviors and habits into skills through acting out, make the use of written and spoken language easier and more effective, provide students with opportunities to use written, spoken and visual language products to express their feelings, thoughts and wishes and teach them how to communicate with body language and movements (Maden, 2010).

According to Erdoğan (2013: 9), the first thing that the leader / teacher has to do about creative drama activities is to plan the activity. The leader has to answer "what, why, when, how, where, who" questions about the activity to be conducted and to plan the activity according to the answers to these questions. In addition, age, gender, readiness level and developmental characteristics

of the group with which the activity will be conducted should be known and taken into consideration by the teacher, which will affect the whole process. Research shows that drama method has an important place in teaching Turkish. The person who will apply drama methods and techniques effectively and actively is the drama leader; that is, the teacher. The teacher needs to have sufficient knowledge and skills in this area so that he/she can plan the drama process, the distribution of duties, and actively involve and direct students through the activities. The extent to which students accomplish the course objectives and the effectiveness and efficiency of the methods and techniques to be used by the teacher depends on the competence of the teacher in this area. In this context, it is important to determine the state of Turkish teachers' use of the drama method in their classes, identify the difficulties and deficiencies they encounter while using it, and their opinions and suggestions in relation to the use of it.

## METHOD

### Research model

The current study conducted to determine the opinions of Turkish teachers about the use of the drama method is a qualitative research. The current study employed the case study design. The interview method was used in the study. The aim of the interviewer is to elicit the participating Turkish teachers' opinions about the drama method.

### Participants

The study group of the current research is comprised of 17 Turkish teachers working in the city of Kars. The participating teachers were selected by means of the maximum variation sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods. In the maximum case sampling, the variation of the individuals to be included in the sample should be maximum. That is, rich variation in the groups taken as the sampling will help collect more materials (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). Thus, in the current study, the Turkish teachers working at schools from low, medium and high socio-economic levels were included in the study group. The names of the teachers included in the study group were coded as Ö1, Ö2 ....

**Table 1. Demographic features of the participating teachers**

		Number
Length of professional service	1-10 years	12
	11-20 years	5
Education level	Education Faculty Turkish Teaching	17
Gender	Female	8
	Male	9
Total		17

### Data collection instrument

In the current study, a semi-structured interview form was used as the data collection instrument. In the construction process of the interview form, first an item pool was established and then the items were subjected to the review of two academicians specialized in teaching Turkish. On the basis of the academicians' opinions and suggestions, the final form of the interview form was given.

## Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed by means of the content analysis method. The main operation performed in content analysis is to combine similar data around certain concepts and themes and to arrange and interpret them in such a way that the reader can comprehend them (Yıldırım and Şimşek; 2006). The interview data were read line by line and codes and themes were formed. As a result of the content analysis conducted, the codes and themes were derived from the teachers' responses. These codes were then grouped under the determined themes. After a while, the interview data were re-read and the final forms of the codes and themes were given. "Coding concerns how you define what the data you have analyzed communicate" (Gibbs, 2007: 38, cited in Glesne, 2012: 265).

For the reliability of the study, the determined themes and codes were analyzed by another researcher and these two analyses were compared. Through agreement, themes and codes were formed. The inter-rater reliability obtained as a result of the comparison of the two researchers' opinions was found to be .85 (Reliability=agreement/agreement + disagreement) (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Moreover, the codes on which the two researchers disagreed were discussed and were placed under suitable categories. Moreover, the frequencies for each code are presented in tables and then the findings are interpreted. In order to establish the reliability in the current study, two important procedures were followed. In the first one, the analysis process was explained in detail (how the conceptual category has been arrived at) and in the second one, for each of the categories elicited, the samples thought to best represent it were selected and they are presented in the findings section.

## FINDINGS

**Table 2. Teachers' opinions about the concept of drama**

Theme	Codes	f
About drama	Acting out	5
	Establishing empathy	5
	Teaching through games	4
	Developing cognitive skills	2
	Creativity	1
	Imagination	1
	Imitation	2
	Reification	1
	Learning by having fun	1
	Being active	1
	Learning by doing and experiencing	2
Reflection of life	2	
Total		27

When the concept of drama was asked to the participating teachers, they defined the drama primarily as acting out, developing empathy and teaching through games. One of the teachers stated his/her opinions about drama as follows; (Ö6): "*It is a way of acting out of an activity, event, emotion, different roles or a story verbally or non-verbally through imitation.*" Another teacher (Ö13) defined the drama as: "*Establishing empathy, reconciling with different viewpoints.*" The teacher (Ö16) is placed in the code of teaching through games with the following statement: "*Drama refers to teaching of a subject through gamification.*" On the other hand, (Ö12) defined drama as learning by doing and experiencing; "*One of the most effective types of learning is learning by doing and experiencing.*" In general, the teachers indicated that they see drama as a method that makes students active yet they used different statements to say so.

**Table 3. Teachers' opinions about text types they use the drama method to study**

Theme	Codes	f
Where	To study texts including four language skills	4
	To study didactic and critical texts	4
	To study theatrical texts	4
	To study tales, folktales and fables	4
	To study dialogue-based texts	3
	To study idioms	1
	To study narrative texts	1
	To study historical texts	1
Total		22

When the teachers were asked the types of texts they use the drama method to study, it was found that they most use it to study “texts including four language skills, didactic and critical texts, theatrical texts, tales, folktales and fables, dialogue-based texts” and aside from these they use it “to study idioms, narrative texts and historical texts”. Some sample statements from the interviews conducted with the teachers about the theme of the texts for which the drama method is used are given below; (Ö7) “*I use the drama method in my classes. Particularly for listening and writing texts, I prefer the drama method. I attach great importance to using creative drama for activities including four language skills.*” (Ö3) “*I particularly prefer the drama method for didactic and critical texts.*” (Ö8) “*I frequently use it as it makes students' active participation possible while studying activities related to theatrical texts and idioms.*” (Ö10) “*I use the drama method while particularly studying tales, folktales and fables. I want students to enact the characters in the texts by establishing empathy.*” (Ö15) “*I generally use it in dialogue-based texts. Though not very frequently, I use it in historical texts.*”

**Table 4. Teachers' opinions about the stages of their lesson where they use the drama method**

Theme	Codes	f
Stages of the lesson	Warm-up	8
	Wrap-up	8
	Activities	4
	The situations not understood	1
Total		21

The teachers stated that they generally use the drama method in the introduction and conclusion sections of the lesson. Some teacher opinions about this theme are given below; (Ö16) “*I use the drama method at the beginning of the lesson to draw the attention of students. I use it when I want to motivate students to direct their attention to a subject. Sometimes, I use it in the conclusion section of the lesson. I use it to make a subject understood better and to determine how much a subject has been understood.*” (Ö12) “*I sometimes use it in the introduction section of the lesson to draw students' attention. Sometimes, after studying a text, I assign students a drama task for them to better understand the text.*” (Ö2) “*I generally use it at the beginning of the lesson to raise students' awareness of the subject to be studied.*”

**Table 5. Teachers' opinions about the benefits of the drama method**

Theme	Codes	f
Benefits	Developing the skill of establishing empathy	10
	Reinforcing a subject through games	6
	Developing critical thinking skill	4
	Increasing love for and interest in the course	4
	Increasing self-confidence	4
	Promoting creativity	2
	Socialization	3
	Developing four language skills	2
	Developing problem-solving skills	2
	Promoting learning by doing and experiencing	2
	Allowing the use of body language	1
	Helping the teacher get to know the student	1
Total	Preparation for the lesson	1
		42

The teachers think that the most important benefit of the drama method for the student is to develop the skill of establishing empathy. In addition, the drama method is believed to reinforce the studied subjects, to foster students' thinking skills, to raise students' interest in the course and to increase students' self-confidence. (Ö1) *"It has significant benefits in terms of developing the use of four basic language skills (reading, listening, speaking, writing). More importantly it improves students' empathic thinking skill. In addition, students' critical thinking and problem-solving skills also improve."* (Ö7) *"Primarily, it helps me to get to know students and to evaluate their interests, attitudes and abilities. When evaluated in terms of the benefits it provides for students, I think that it improves students' creative thinking, analysis, evaluation and empathy skills."* (Ö11) *"It develops the student's self-confidence. It enables students who are cognitively less developed to say something. It positively affects students' participation in lesson."* (Ö16) *"It may be difficult to teach some concepts to students. They try to learn such concepts by memorizing. This prevents permanent learning from occurring. As the child learns by doing and experiencing through drama, it increases the retention of the learned information. It raises the child's awareness. They can learn by having fun."*

**Table 6. Teachers' opinions about their state of having taken drama training**

Theme	Codes	f
Having taken drama training	Yes	13
	No	4
Total		17

During the interviews conducted with the teachers, it was elicited that 13 of the teachers had taken drama training while four hadn't. Only one of the teachers, Ö9 stated that he/she had received drama training both during his/her undergraduate education and in seminars, courses and in-service training. Yet, Ö9 said the following in relation to his/her competence in drama; *"I am good but I am not good enough. This is related to limited opportunities and professional development. I have come to a certain level but I need to advance."* Some other teachers' opinions about their competence in the drama method are as follows; (Ö3) *"I feel competent due to the training I received at university. I was engaged in theater and drama activities at high school and university."* (Ö8) *"Yes, I find my competence enough because I do not have any problems in improvising a scenario and acting it out. In this way, I can explain events more realistically."* (Ö16) *"I feel competent in drama because I took drama courses at school. I actively participated in drama activities at school. From time to time, I get my students engaged in drama activities; therefore, I feel competent."* (Ö4) *"I do not feel competent enough because I believe that creative drama activities should be offered to students from*

*kindergarten to university. Therefore, as I have not systematically participated in creative drama activities in the past, I do not see myself competent enough.*” (Ö13) *“I do not see competent because I have not received any training about it.”*

**Table 7. Teachers’ opinions about the difficulties they have encountered while employing the drama method**

Theme	Codes	f
Difficulties encountered	Lack of preparedness on the part of students	11
	Crowded classrooms	5
	Bad physical conditions of the class	4
	Unsuitable texts	4
	Shortage of time	3
Total		27

When the teachers were asked what difficulties they encounter while using the drama method, the teachers stated that they mostly experience student-induced difficulties and students do not have necessary skills to get engaged in drama activities. In addition, crowded classrooms, bad physical conditions in the class, unsuitable texts for the drama method and shortage of time are other difficulties encountered by the teachers. Some teacher opinions about this theme are given below: (Ö5) *“I sometimes cannot find texts suitable for the level of students. Students’ drama skills are weak and the drama training should be given from the kindergarten; thus, students are not competent enough.”* (Ö10) *“As classrooms are crowded, it may not be possible to assign tasks to all students. There can be extremely eager students to take part while there can be some others who do not want to participate in. Involving reluctant students in drama activities can sometimes be highly difficult.”* (Ö15) *“There are too many objectives to be addressed in a short time.”* (Ö6) *“The textbooks prepared in line with the curriculum do not provide many opportunities to use the method because some of the activities are not suitable for the level of students. Students confuse drama with theatrical texts. There is no suitable environment in classes.”*

**Table 8. Teachers’ suggestions for the more effective use of the drama method in class**

Theme	Codes	f
Suggestions	It should be a separate course	6
	It should be used in other courses	5
	In-service training should be given to teachers	5
	Drama classes should be established	2
	Textbooks should be prepared as suitable for the drama method	2
	It should be required and planned from kindergarten	2
Total		22

According to the data obtained from the interviews conducted with the teachers, for the more effective use of the drama method in classes, drama should be offered as a separate course. Moreover, they believe that the use of the drama method in other classes would be useful. In addition, it has been suggested that teachers should be given in-service training by the ministry, drama classes should be established at schools, activities in the textbooks should be prepared to be suitable for the drama method and drama training should be actively given to students from kindergarten. Some teacher opinions about this theme are given below; (Ö1) *“A drama course independent of the Turkish course should be incorporated into curriculum. Teachers should be given in-service training about the use of drama. In all levels of education and within different courses, the creative drama method should be employed.”* (Ö5) *“The drama course should be incorporated into curriculum as a course independent*



*of the Turkish course. Textbooks should have content allowing students to use the drama method.” (Ö9) “At schools, at least one drama class can be established. There are stages at schools but it is difficult to use them.” (Ö8) “We are acting in compliance with plans. In place of the texts in textbooks, situations suitable for drama can be used. That is, situations allowing the teacher to create games or activities can be provided. As I am concerned about catching up with the curriculum, we cannot devote much time to such activities.”*

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

In the current study conducted to determine Turkish teachers' self-efficacy in relation to the use of creative drama, the teachers were asked what drama connotes to them, the concepts emerging are; acting out, establishing empathy, learning through games, development of cognitive skills, creativity, imagination, imitation, reification, learning by having fun, being active, learning by doing and experiencing, relating to the real life. When we look at these findings, we can see that the teachers associate drama mostly with acting out, learning through games and establishing empathy. In a study conducted by Güven (2012) on the use of the drama method by classroom teachers in the Turkish class, the teachers defined drama as play, acting out, imitation, theater-stage play and learning from experiences. In both of the studies, the codes derived from the teachers' opinions are similar to each other.

According to the findings of the current study, the teachers use the drama method most to study texts including four language skills, didactic and critical texts, theatrical texts, tales, folktales and fables and dialogue-based texts. “As language development requires rapid cognitive development and high level of communication, it is considerably suitable for the use of the drama method. As drama activities provide opportunities for students to practice the real life through active participation, quality creative drama activities seem to be of great importance in language teaching” (Maden 2010b).

When teachers were asked where they use the drama more; they responded that they use it in the introduction, conclusion and activities of the lesson. The teachers stated that they use drama in the .introduction section of the lesson to draw students' interest and to increase their motivation. Some of the teachers stated that they use in the conclusion section of the lesson and some stated that they prefer it in activities. Güven (2012) also reported that teachers use drama most to motivate students.

The findings of the current study have also revealed that the drama method can provide the following benefits for students: developing the skill of establishing empathy, reinforcing the studied subjects through games, developing students' thinking skills, enhancing students' interest in the course, increasing students' self-confidence, developing students' creativity, socialization, developing four basic language skills, developing problem-solving skills, learning by doing and experiencing, using body language, getting to know what learning is. Tutuman (2011) conducted a study with the participation of Turkish teachers and concluded that; the Turkish teachers using the creative drama method in their classes use it as it is an effective method and makes the lesson more enjoyable. In the study by Güven (2012), the participating teachers stated that they find drama useful as it allows learning by doing and experiencing, makes learning more permanent, motivates students, helps students socialize and increases students' self-confidence. In a study carried out by Aykaç and Metinnam (2019) on teachers, all of the participants were found to be of the opinion that the use of creative drama as a method of instruction in their classes makes learning more effective and enjoyable, helps students socialize and increases their self-confidence, promotes communication among students, allows teachers to reach all of the students, eliminates monotony from classes and makes learning fun. As can be seen in the studies reported in the literature, teachers find using drama in their classes useful for various reasons.

According to the data of the current study, 13 of the participating teachers have taken training about the use of drama in classes while 4 of them haven't. The teachers stating that they had taken training about drama took this training in their undergraduate education and participated in various drama activities and thus they found themselves competent in the use of drama in their classes. The

other teachers on the other hand stated that they had not taken any training about drama; therefore, they did not find themselves competent in using drama in their classes. Tutuman (2011) concluded that the Turkish teachers having participated in in-service drama training, having taken courses about drama are better at knowing and applying drama than the teachers not having taken any courses about drama. The course given in the undergraduate education in the department of Turkish teaching is a course given together with theatre. The drama course is not offered as a separate course. And given that this course is given just for one term, it is not adequate for students to acquire enough knowledge and skills related to drama. Elitok Kesici (2014) conducted a study on 10 teachers and found that only three of the teachers had participated in training about drama and concluded that this number is highly inadequate and all teachers should take part in drama courses. In all the studies, the teachers not having taken any drama training stated that they feel incompetent in this area.

When the participating teachers were asked their opinions about the difficulties they encounter while using the drama method, they stated that they experience some problems and difficulties as students are not prepared, classrooms are crowded, physical conditions of classrooms are bad, texts are not suitable for drama activities and there is a shortage of time. Aykaç and Metinnam's study (2019) found that the participating teachers encounter many problems in the administration process of creative drama at schools. The problems they experienced were found to be crowded classrooms, classroom settings unsuitable for drama, lack of drama workshops at schools, intense curriculum, long time needed for drama activities and difficulty in controlling the class. In relation to students, students' reluctance, students' experiencing problems in role sharing, students' inability to express themselves, students' inability to understand what they are expected to do, lack of compliance between the level of the selected drama and students' competence level and domination of the activities by students with better talent for drama have been reported to be causing problems in different stages of the drama process (Ormancı and Şaşmaz Ören, 2010). Adıgüzel (2002) also stated that students always want to play games in the warm-up section of the lesson, that they are not much willing to participate in and they do not show enough interest, that shy children do not want to improvise, that they keep away from sharing and that they cannot adapt to the process easily.

The other findings of the current study are related to the teachers' suggestions. The teachers made the following suggestions for the drama method to be more effective and efficient; drama should be a separate course, it should be used in other courses, in-service training should be given to teachers, drama classes should be established, textbooks should be prepared as suitable for drama activities, the drama course should be compulsory and planned from the kindergarten onwards. All of the teachers participating in Güven's study (2012) stated that for the more effective use of the drama method in Turkish classes, this method should be learned and implemented well by the teachers. To this end, they argued that effective and efficient in-service training programs should be organized by the Ministry of National Education. All of the teachers stressed that the drama course should be compulsory in elementary education. Moreover, some of the teachers maintained that while designing the elementary school Turkish curriculum, it should be related to the drama method. In the literature, it has been reported that in-service trainings organized to inform teachers about the use of drama are inadequate and more effective in-service trainings are required by teachers. Moreover, many schools do not have settings suitable for performing drama activities, which has been reported to be an important problem.

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