The Effect of the Story Completion Technique on Creative Writing Skills

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Written works are the most significant tool in transmitting a society's culture to future generations. Therefore, enhancing the effectiveness and usage of creative writing is important. Various methods and techniques are employed in writing education to foster a love for writing from a young age and to aid in producing creative writing works. One such method involves completing unfinished stories. This study aims to demonstrate the effect of the story completion technique on students' creative writing skills. The study was conducted using a pre-test, post-test control group design among experimental studies. The sample consisted of 37 fourth-grade students from a primary school in the Central Anatolia Region, Türkiye with 19 in the experimental group and 18 in the control group. The experimental group was subjected to the story completion technique, while the control group received no special treatment and followed the Turkish language curriculum as planned by the teacher. The interventions lasted for 8 weeks. Data were collected by scoring students' creative writing products using the "Creative Writing Products Evaluation Scale" and were statistically processed using the SPSS software package. In the analysis of the data, the t-test was used for paired comparisons, and significance was sought at the .05 level. The results showed that students in the experimental group, who used the story completion technique, had significantly higher writing scores than those in the control group. Furthermore, it was observed that the writing levels of students in the experimental group improved from medium to good. These results indicate that the story completion technique is effective in enhancing students' creative writing skills.

Introduction

Language is the cornerstone that forms the culture of a society. It is one of the most important dynamics that holds a community together. Language is not only a tool for communication and expression but also the primary means of transmitting culture to future generations. Mothers address their young with language, lovers pour their hearts into songs, and poets touch hearts with their words (Akyol & Şahin, 2019). Güneş (2013) defines language as a system through which people share their feelings, thoughts, and observations

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using signs or words. In Turkey, native language education begins from the first grade of primary school with Turkish language lessons. It is certain that children who use their mother tongue correctly, beautifully, and effectively will not only succeed in Turkish language classes but also in all subjects and endeavors throughout their academic life.

In the Education Program (Ministry of National Education [MoNE], 2019), the learning domains of the Turkish language course are categorized under four general headings: 'listening/viewing, speaking, reading, and writing'. These four fundamental skills are interdependent and reinforce each other. A deficiency in one naturally affects the others. From the time in the womb, human beings begin to listen to their surroundings. From infancy, they learn many skills and pieces of information by listening. After a while, they start to imitate what they hear, marking the first step in developing speaking skills. Listening and speaking are skills individuals acquire before starting school. However, reading and writing are typically two fundamental skills acquired after starting school. Akyol (2018) defines reading as a process of understanding and interpreting information through effective communication between the writer and reader, within a specific purpose and plan. Reading is a critical skill that broadens individuals' horizons, allowing them to comprehend and construct different thoughts, facilitating communication between the writer and reader. Writing, another learning domain in Turkish, is strongly linked to reading. To write well, it is essential to be a good reader, and the development of vocabulary through reading and listening is crucial.

Writing skill is the most challenging to learn and develop compared to other language skills due to its complex nature. It involves both mental and physical processes. Writing is the expression of an individual's feelings, thoughts, desires, and dreams in a visible form on paper through shapes and symbols (Göçer, 2016). If the goal is to nurture individuals who can express themselves to their surroundings, understand and comfortably convey their emotions and thoughts, and establish effective communication, then imparting good writing skills is essential (Arıcı & Ungan, 2013). In Turkish language classes, it is important to equip students with legible, expressive writing skills that clearly convey their emotions and thoughts, comply with spelling rules, and demonstrate clear and fluent creative writing.

Creative writing is nourished by individuals' creativity. Creativity is a concept frequently encountered in recent years, especially in the fields of education and technology. The term 'creativity' originates from the Latin word 'Creare,' which means to create, discover, reinvent, or produce (Beydemir, 2010). It encompasses a range of skills, phenomena, and qualities inherent in creation, such as patience, intuition, imagination, experimentation, research, discovery, modification, addition, subtraction, correction, and reconstruction, along with curiosity and originality (San, 2004).

The most crucial element in developing writing aimed at producing original work is creativity. According to Şahin (2016), creative writing is the process of an individual blending what they see, hear, read, and perceive in their own imagination, and then combining it with their own experiences to produce something new and original in writing. Essentially, creative writing involves presenting all the information obtained from observations about the external world in a way that is distinct from others (Kaya, 2013). The choice of topic is important in producing a good creative writing piece. Students should choose topics that they are interested in and love to write about, and that are appropriate for their level. At times, the choice of topic should be left to the students. Creativity can be fostered by allowing students to feel comfortable and free.

Through creative writing, students pour their feelings, thoughts, and prior knowledge onto paper, blending the old with the new in well-structured sentences. This process aids in the development of individuals who can express themselves, imagine, have an enriched vocabulary, think critically, and devise various solutions to problems they encounter. Given the significance of the creative writing skill, it is essential to try different practices and techniques to cultivate it. In primary schools, numerous techniques can be employed to foster a love for creative writing and its effective use. The literature on creative writing includes various techniques for its enhancement. Some of the most frequently used methods include 'nature and environmental trips, daily writing, writing a different ending to a given text, creating newspaper articles, using various objects to create story characters and write about them, combining different fairy tale characters to create a new work, translating a literary genre into another to form a text, using story maps, and completing unfinished stories'.

In this study, which focuses on the story completion technique among these methods, students are provided with an interrupted story and asked to complete it by incorporating their imagination, prior knowledge, feelings, and thoughts. 'The story completion technique contributes to children's expressive richness and the development of their creativity' (Aral, Kandır, & Yaşar, 2002), supports their language and social development, and facilitates easier communication with others. Additionally, as children create original products, their creativity is further nurtured.

In developing students' creative writing skills, the use of different techniques in practical activities and sharing the results with interested parties are of great importance. However, a review of the literature indicates that research on creative writing skills and the development of creative writing techniques is limited in Turkey, prompting this study.

This research was conducted to determine the effect of the story completion technique on the creative writing skills of fourth-grade primary school students. Within the framework of this general objective, the study sought to answer the following sub-questions.

(1) Is there a significant difference between the pre-test scores in creative writing of students in the experimental group, where the story completion technique is applied, and those in the control group?
(2) Is there a significant difference between the post-test scores in creative writing of students in the experimental group and those in the control group, where the story completion technique is applied?
(3) Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in creative writing of students in the experimental group, where the story completion technique is applied?
(4) Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in creative writing of students in the control group?

Method

The study was conducted using a "Pretest-Posttest Control Group Design" among quantitative research designs. "Experimental designs are research patterns where data sets to be observed are directly generated under the control of the researcher, with the aim of establishing cause-and-effect relationships" (Karasar, 2002). This research aimed to determine the effect of the incomplete story completion technique on students' creative writing skills. Therefore, conducting pre-test and post-test measurements to determine the writing scores of the students was deemed suitable for this technique.

Participants

The population of the study consists of 4th grade students from a city in the Central Anatolia Region. The sample of the study consisted of 4th grade primary school students who continue their education in two branches of one of the primary schools in this province. The students included in the sample were selected using 'purposive sampling,' a non-random sampling method (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2006). In purposive sampling, individuals, events, objects, or situations that are believed to contain important and rich information and meet certain criteria are included in the study (Büyüköztürk, Kılıç-Çakmak, Akgün, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2018). The decision on which class would be the experimental and which the control was made by drawing lots. A total of 37 students participated in the study, including 19 in the experimental group and 18 in the control group, all of whom were present at school on the days of the application and volunteered to participate. Parental consent forms were obtained for the students' participation in the study. In forming the sample, the list of primary schools in the Central District was first obtained from the Provincial Directorate of National Education. Then, a school with no more than four fourth-grade sections was randomly included in the sample. From this primary school, two fourth-grade classes with similar levels of achievement and socio-economic status were identified and selected as the sample group.

Implementation Stages

In the research, the story completion technique was applied over a period of 8 weeks. Each week, students were given a different unfinished story and asked to complete it using their imagination and prior knowledge, and to add a title to their stories. The incomplete stories presented to the students for completion were prepared by the researchers. Before the applications began, an unfinished story starting with the sentence 'Gülce felt very lonely that day...' was given to both the experimental and control groups to complete. The stories written by the students were evaluated separately by two researchers and another assessor using the Creative Writing Products Development Scale, and the arithmetic mean of the three evaluation scores was recorded as the students' pre-test scores. The applications lasted 6 weeks, during which the experimental group completed 6 different unfinished stories prepared by the researchers each week under the guidance of their teachers. During the application period, no special procedure was carried out in the control group; the classroom teacher conducted lessons according to their plan and carried out routine writing activities. In the 8th week, the unfinished story starting with 'Gülce felt very lonely that day...' used also as the pre-test, was again administered to both the experimental and control groups. The stories written by the students were again evaluated using the Creative Writing Products Development Scale, and the arithmetic mean of the three evaluators' scores was recorded as the students' post-test
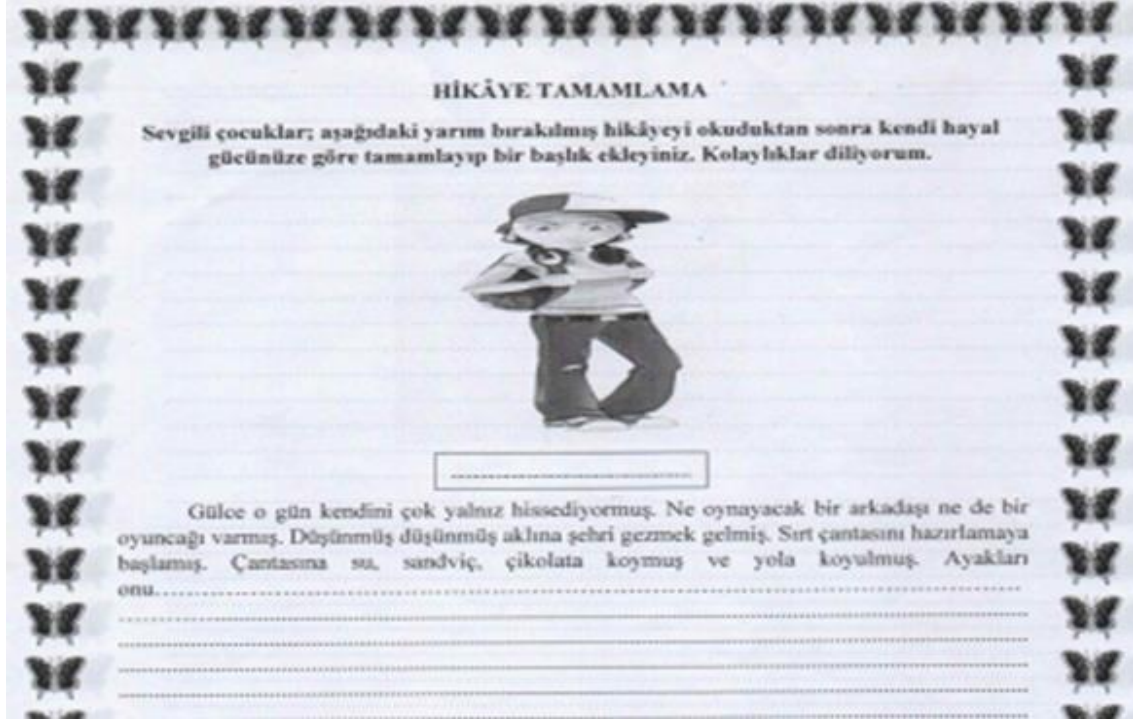
scores.

Figure 1. Example of Story Completion Application

Data Collection

In the research, data were obtained by scoring the stories completed by students using the 'Creative Writing Products Development Scale,' developed by Kasap (2019). This scale, designed for fourth-grade primary students, comprises 24 items and is unidimensional. It is graded on a 1-5 point scale. The factor analysis of the items shows eigenvalues ranging from .75 to .90. It has been found that the consistency coefficient of the items is .50, and the correlation coefficient between applications is .64. The overall Cronbach's Alpha value of the scale is .72, while the Cronbach's Alpha value calculated for this study is .96.

The writing levels of students based on the score ranges from the scale are as follows:

'24-48 Points Range: Low level,

49-72 Points Range: Medium level,

73-96 Points Range: Good level,

97-120 Points Range: Advanced level.'

Before starting the application, students completed a story, and these scores were recorded as the pre-test. After the 8-week application period, the scores obtained from the completed stories were recorded as the post-test.

Data Analysis

Within the framework of the research objectives, specific statistical software was used for the necessary statistical solutions of the collected quantitative data related to the defined

sub-problems. Frequency (f), percentage (%), mean (M), and standard deviation (SD) values were utilized to determine the creative writing skills of fourth-grade primary students. A normality check was conducted to decide on the analysis method.

Table 1. Findings Related to the Normality of Data

N	37
Mean	56
Median	53
Mod	53
Skewness	,248
Kurtosis	-1,081
Shapiro Wilk	,124; p>,05

When examining Table 1, it can be observed that the mode and median values are equal, and the mean value is close to these values. The skewness and kurtosis values vary between .248 and -1.081. In a normal distribution, the mode, median, and mean values are equal. Literature emphasizes that skewness-kurtosis values should be between (-1.5) and (+1.5) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2006). On the other hand, since the sample size is less than 50, the Shapiro-Wilk test was conducted, and the values were found to be statistically non-significant (,124; p>.05). Considering these reasons, it can be said that the data exhibit a normal distribution. Based on the normality analysis, the application of parametric tests was deemed appropriate. For data analysis, the t-test was used for paired comparisons, seeking significance at the .05 level.

Ethics Committee Approval

Ethical guidelines were adhered to during the execution of the study. Approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the university where the researcher is affiliated, as well as from the institution where the research was to be conducted. Below are the official details of the ethics committee approval:

Committee Name: Kırşehir Ahi Evran University Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee

Research and Publication Ethics Committee Decision Date: 20.10.2022

Document Number: 2022/08

Results

The first sub-problem of the research was formulated as: "Is there a significant difference between the pre-test scores in creative writing of students in the experimental group, where the story completion technique is applied, and those in the control group?" Findings related to this sub-problem are presented in Table 2:

Table 2. Pre-test t-test analysis results for experimental and control group students

Measurement	Groups	N	$\bar{X}$	SD	t	p
Pre-Test Scores	Experimental	19	64.63	15.08	2.639	.081
	Control	18	47.94	22.81		

When examining Table 2, it is observed that the mean score of the experimental group students in creative writing ($\bar{X}$ = 64.63) is higher than that of the control group students ($\bar{X}$ =

47.94). However, this difference is not statistically significant (p > 0.05). Additionally, both groups appear to have a medium level of creative writing proficiency.

The second sub-problem of the research was: "*Is there a significant difference between the post-test scores in creative writing of students in the experimental group and those in the control group where the story completion technique is applied?*" The findings related to this sub-problem are presented in the Table 3:

Table 3. Post-test t-test analysis results for experimental and control group students

Measurement	Groups	N	X̄	S	t	p
Post-Test Scores	Experimental	19	82.58	12.05	5.551	.030
	Control	18	52.00	20.58		

According to the t-test results examining the difference between the creative writing post-test scores of students in the experimental and control groups, a significant difference was found (p<0.05). Furthermore, the average score of the experimental group (X̄=82.58) indicates that students' creative writing skills have reached a good level, while the control group's average score remains at a medium level (X̄=52.00).

The third sub-problem of the research was formulated as: "Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in creative writing of students in the experimental group where the story completion technique is applied?" The findings related to this sub-problem are presented in Table 4:

Table 4. T-test analysis results for the difference between pre-test and post-test scores of experimental group students

Measurement	N	X̄	SD	t	p
Pre-Test	19	64.63	15.08	3.752	.001
Post-Test	19	82.58	12.05		

The t-test results, used to determine if there is a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores of students in the experimental group, revealed a significant difference between their post-test and pre-test scores (t(19) = 3.752, p < 0.05). This result suggests that the incomplete story completion technique applied to the experimental group had a positive impact on students' creative writing.

The fourth sub-problem of the research was: "Is there a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test scores in creative writing of students in the control group?" The findings related to this question are presented in Table 4:

Table 5. T-test analysis results for the difference between pre-test and post-test scores of control group students

Measurement	N	X̄	SD	t	p
Pre-Test	18	47.94	22.81	.811	.428
Post-Test	18	52.00	20.58		

Upon examining the values in the table, it is seen that the creative writing pre-test score of the control group students was X̄=47.94, while their post-test score was X̄=52. Although the scores of the control group increased in the post-test, this difference is not statistically significant (t(18)=.811, p>0.05).

Conclusion and Discussion

Upon examining the results of this research, which aimed to determine the impact of the story completion technique on the creative writing skills of fourth-grade students, it was found that there was no significant difference between the pre-test scores of the experimental group and the control group. Additionally, it was determined that the creative writing skills of both groups were at a medium level. A review of the literature also reveals numerous studies indicating that writing is a skill not very well performed by students (Kasap, 2019; Rahman & Rahman, 2022; Sulak & Erdoğan, 2019). Among these, Kasap (2019) also identified in his study that the creative writing skills of fourth-grade primary students were at a medium level before the implementation of creative writing activities.

Upon examining the post-test scores of the experimental and control groups in the study, a significant difference favoring the experimental group was identified. Literature also shows findings that alternative writing activities positively affect students' creative writing skills (Austen, 2005; Beydemir, 2010; Demirbaş & Şahin, 2023; Duru & İşeri, 2015; Erdoğan & Çelikpazu, 2020; Kasap, 2018; Kolaç, 2009; Medd, Hills & Houtz, 2003; Özdemir & Çevik, 2018; Susar Kırmızı, 2008; Şahin & Ata, 2023). Similarly, Duru and İşeri (2015) found that the post-test scores of the experimental group, which was subjected to creative writing techniques, were significantly different from those of the control group. Kasap (2019) also discovered that creative writing activities had a positive impact on fourth-grade students' creative reading, comprehension, writing, and creative writing achievements, with a significant difference between pre-test and post-test scores. Demir (2010) found that students wrote more creatively when given freedom in topic selection during the creative writing process. Austen (2005), in a study examining creative writing values in English Literature classes, found that implementing creative writing activities improved students' writing and increased their interest in Literature classes. Similarly, Şahin and Ata (2023) concluded in their study that the use of the story map technique improved the creative writing skills of seventh-grade students. Öztürk (2007) also found that the experimental group, which participated in creative writing activities, showed significant differences in creative writing compared to the control group in a study assessing the creative writing skills of fifth-grade primary students. This study also concludes that the story completion technique used in the creative writing activities led to an increase in post-test scores compared to the pre-test scores. Similarly, Tonyalı (2010) found that creative writing applications enhanced students' creative writing. Pawliczak (2015) determined that the most effective method for improving students' creative writing skills was the implementation of creative writing practices. Considering these findings, it can be said that the story completion technique positively influences students' creative writing skills.

Suggestions

The findings of the study indicate that students initially performed at a medium level in creative writing activities. However, it was determined that through creative writing activities, the level of proficiency in the experimental group improved to a good level. Therefore, writing activities should be made more enjoyable for students by offering diverse writing exercises.

This study was conducted with 37 students in a single school. Conducting future research with a larger number of students could yield more diverse and detailed results. This study concluded that the story completion technique used in the process of developing creative writing positively influenced students' creative writing skills. It is suggested that in addition to frequently implementing story completion activities in Turkish language classes, other creative writing techniques should also be applied within a scientific research framework and their results compared.

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