

## Interpretation Theory and Creative Writing

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**ABSTRACT** Creative thinking is among the basic skills to be acquired within the context of the Turkish language teaching program, which aims to teach students how to express their opinions in a coherent manner, how to use expressions leading to different ideas, how to create cause and effect relationships, and how to make classifications and comparisons. The text produced at the end of this process is usually lacking in originality. In the present study, the document analysis method based on the determination of the pre-service Turkish language teachers' reviews of poems and stories and whether they turned them into creative writing was used. After the students were confronted with the literary works, improvements in their written works were observed in terms of fluency, consistency and originality in the expression of feelings and thoughts.

### INTRODUCTION

Creativity is an ability found in daily life, scientific studies, total processes, attitudes and behaviors in each individual. One can think of the creative writing concept using this definition. Creative writing is related to creative ability. To find success in creative writing practice and to take the first steps in beginning authorship, creativity is the key factor. Creative writing is based on a connection of senses and ideas (Temizkan 2010: 621). Being creative is something expected from individuals and students in today's world. In creativity, the main objective is to create a novel and original thing. In a creative viewpoint, obtaining an exceptional view of the events and cases and seeing and interpreting the ideas from different perspectives are involved. Unearthing human-specific creativity and developing it are of great importance in making people ready for the modern world.

In Turkey, it is very difficult to unearth creativity and improve upon it because of the exam-oriented education system. Writing is one of the skills areas in which students have great difficulty. The comprehension activities in Turkish textbooks are thought to be insufficient in this aspect. The students are generally asked to an-

swer questions to obtain the information in the text, not to find out how the writer composed the text to give this information. Furthermore, although the process of writing is adopted, it is not put into practice with activities such as writing on the text read or a proverb, giving students a list of writing rules (Diliduzgun 2011). The process of producing a written text can be considered a set of activities that require the active participation of the teacher and is also conducted within a certain time span (Cetinkaya 2015: 111). As Seow (2002: 319) points out, teachers should model the writing process at every stage and teach specific writing strategies to students through meaningful classroom activities and as students go through the various stages of writing, they understand what kind of product is expected at each stage. As noted by Demirel, "One of the basic language skills, namely writing skill, takes more time to develop when compared to other skills and requires a lot of practice" (Demirel 2003). Creativity can be particularly seen and evaluated concretely in writing skills. Writing skills should be continuously exercised and improved so that creativity can be unearthed and developed. For this purpose, students should be encouraged to conduct creative writing activities, this is believed to enhance students' perception of the outer world and enable them to bring originality to their perceptions.

### Creative Writing

Writing is not an isolated mental activity, but is closely linked to other creative design tasks

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such as drawing and music composition. The skill develops spontaneously from oral language production through a general cognitive mechanism whereby a thinker re-represents knowledge that was embedded in automated processes into an explicit form. Although the account is far from complete, it can form a bridge between the more detailed cognitive models of a writer as a thinker and the broader theories of writing in a socio-cultural setting (Sharples 1996: 2). Creative writing can be defined as the fluent expression of thoughts in an original manner by creating logical linkages between them based on the individual's schemata in a written form. The objective of creative writing activities is to help the students express their feelings and thoughts without repetition in an interesting, fluent and original way. In creative writing activities, it is of great importance to provide students with opportunities to express the content of their schemata from their point of view and in various ways to enhance their creative writing skills and creativity. Creative writing can be defined as a writing style in which individuals fictionalize the existing concepts, information, events, sounds, images and dreams in the mind and associate them with each other so that they can come up with a new product (Guleryuz 2006: 126) or they can express their feelings and opinions freely on a piece of paper by using their imagination (Oral 2003: 8). As noted by Göcer (2010: 178), students' internalization of the writing process from subject selection to proofreading is necessary for them to acquire a productive, creative and efficient written narrative skill.

According to interpretation theory, the author does not tell everything in the text; instead, he leaves some ambiguities to be interpreted by students. In light of his/her schemata, the reader derives the meaning and interprets it. If the reader could not acquire the reading skill in the appropriate levels of schooling, he/she is not expected to make reasonable inferences. Reviews come into being as a result of the interpretation of the text by the reader based on his/her schemata. Gokturk (1980) argues that there are three stages of reading: the stage of literacy, the stage of gaining the habit of reading and the stage of becoming a conscious reader. The most demanding and complex stage of reading is the third stage because in this stage, the discussion of the reading process becomes critical, analytic and interpretive. As noted by Mevlana, "A person understands me as much as his/her capacity allows",

that is, the reader perceives, understands and interprets a text based on his/her schemata.

Diliduzgun (2005: 11) gives this example about the perception of a text. "The story by Omer Seyfettin entitled "Kasagi" is studied in Turkish language and literature courses primarily on the grounds of its surface structure of criticism of the acts of lying and slandering. According to this perception, a child, through lies and slander, causes the death of his brother by accident. When such an interpretation of the story is produced during the teaching-learning process, opportunities for multidimensional perception of the text can be provided.

According to Diliduzgun (2005: 13), in the triangle of the author-work-reader, the reader has a role as important as the author or the work. Without the reader, the work loses its meaning. Reconstruction of a work within the reality of the reader is only possible through the perception and comprehension of the work by the reader.

Being a reader-centered approach, the "Perception Theory" argues that the meaning of the text comes into being during the process of reading and new perception manners emerge according to each reader (Moran 2003: 240-249). Thus, the reader uncovers the meaning of a text during the process of reading; the reader perceives the text. Aksit Gokturk defines perception as "the conception of a work of art in relation to the expectations of the reader within the context of history and culture" (Gokturk 1980: 187).

According to the perception theory, texts are continuously reconstructed depending on the time and cultural environment and the knowledge base of the reader. Thus, when the cultural environment or time in which the text is read changes, the meaning attached to the text also changes. Literary works in particular are perceived differently by the reader each time he/she reads it. Therefore, it is important for students to encounter literary works. In reading comprehension education, the goal is to reach the main gist of the text from what is said by the surface structure. One cannot assign certain meaning to what is said in the text because in today's world of literature and art, the text does not have a frozen meaning (Diliduzgun 2014).

## METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in a face class of fifty people. In the present study, the document analysis method based on the determination of the pre-service Turkish language teachers' re-

views of poems and stories and whether they turned them into creative writing was used. For this purpose, half-completed texts were given to the students and the students were asked to complete them.

Then the students' writings were analyzed through the document analysis method to see how the students interpreted the texts in their worlds of feelings and thoughts within the context of the interpretation theory and how they completed the texts and whether they used elements of creative writing in their work. By means of creative writing activities, students can use reconstruction, association chains and brainstorming techniques, stimulate their imagination by improving their perceptions, express their feelings, opinions, life experiences and observations in a logical manner, move away from banality and find originality without repeating words. As a result, they improve themselves and find their style.

## FINDINGS

Within the context of interpretation theory, the researchers analyzed the students' interpretations of the texts based on their knowledge base and reflections of these interpretations on their writing skills. The students were provided with Asaf Halet Celebi's poem "Memleketim" and half-completed stories, such as "Kagni" by Sabahattin Ali, "Kizil Elma" by Omer Seyfettin and "Kabak Cekirdegi" by Halide Edip Adivar. They were asked to perform activities such as completing the texts, putting themselves in one of the characters and then completing the texts and recreating the texts based on given keywords.

**Table 1: Fluency pretest – posttest**

	Mean	N	Standard deviation	t-value	Significance
Pretest	15.92	70	4.91	-15.64	p < 0.00
Posttest	21.28	70	3.87		

A significant difference was found between the students' pre-test and post-test scores in terms of fluency. Written samples produced by the students after they read some literary works significantly differ from the written samples produced before they read them as can be seen in Table 1.

For instance, the students were asked to read the poem "Memleketim" from the book *Om Mani Padme Hum* by Asaf Halet Celebi. They were then asked to write their impressions of the poem and through this study, the students' skill of transferring their perception into creative writing was explored.

First Sample:

*From beginning to end, you can smell history in my Anatolia. My mother, father, grandchild, lover, Mehmet and Ayse, my everything Anatolia. My mainland smells of history in every part.*

*Who knows who has lived here? Who knows how many people are lying under the soil I step on. Who knows how many unwritten stories and legends there are?*

*Like the words written by Cahit Sitki Tarançi for his lover, I want to express my love for you. My homeland, you are as inevitable for me as air, as sacred as bread and as valuable as water.*

*It is not easy to write my feelings for you. You cannot write as you wish. You can find the correct words like Cemal Sureyya, Yskender Pala or Kasgarli Mahmut. No matter which dress I put on you, it is a bit ordinary, dusty and somber. What I want to say is that I cannot find the correct words for you.*

**Table 2: Flexibility pretest – posttest**

	Mean	N	Standard deviation	t-value	Significance
Pretest	16.85	70	5.59	8.13	p < 0.00
Posttest	21.78	70	3.30		

As shown in Table 2, when the students' writings are analyzed in terms of the flexibility criterion of creativity, a significant difference is observed between their pre-test and post-test scores. This significant difference indicates the importance of writing activities done after reading the literary works.

For instance, the poem, "Kizil Elma" was written by a student after he had listened to the story of "Where Kizil Elma Is" twice in the classroom. The students were asked to write the impressions evoked as a result of reading the text. Between the pre-test and post-test scores taken from the sample texts written by the students, a significant difference was found.

Second Sample:  
*Red apple, my father's home*  
*Red apple, lap of my lover*  
*Red apple, the blood flowing through my vein*  
*Red apple, here is my homeland.*  
*It protects my homeland from traitors*  
*I glorify my ideal in my heart*  
*I struggle with faith fearlessly*  
*I take courage from red apple.*

**Table 3: Originality pretest – posttest**

	Mean	N	Standard deviation	t - value	Significance
Pretest	12.21	70	4.63	-15.429	p <0.00
Posttest	17.85	70	4.04		

Another feature of creativity is originality. Regarding this connection, when the students' written samples were examined as can be seen in Table 3, and a significant difference was found between the students' writings produced before they encountered the literary works and their writings produced after they were confronted with the literary texts. Here, the preface of the novel, *Kaplumbagalar*, written by Fakir Baykurt with a critical point of view was read to the students and they were asked to write their impressions evoked by this preface. The following is an excerpt taken from a student's poem written after the preface was read.

Third Sample:

*There is no Koran in the reading tables, the azan is not heard*  
*Where are the hadiths, where are those enlightened?*  
*Every part of Islam geography is full of malady*  
*The army of wisdom is replaced by abasement*  
*This miserable state of ours is worse than the awful*  
*This is the ear of ignorance, even worse*  
*No book tells the story of brother killing each other*  
*Silence the guns, and let peace prevail in the world*  
*If it is said that supremacy comes from devotion*  
*Then why do you humans feel proud and revolt*

*The blood of many innocent people is shed*  
*The area of the tyrant will be narrower*  
*The cry of children is heard everywhere*  
*The antecedents of those tyrannizing were so-called Muslims.*

**Table 4: Detail pretest – posttest**

	Mean	N	Standard deviation	t - value	Significance
Pretest	14.14	70	4.66	-12.27	p <0.00
Posttest	19.35	70	4.07		

Another feature sought among the criteria of creativity is detail. In this regard, when the written samples of the students were examined, it was observed that literary works have positive effects on the students. When the students' pretest and post-test results were compared, a significant difference was seen, which shows that literary works improved the students' ability to involve details in their works (Table 4). The following samples were selected out of the students' works written after the story, "Where Kizilelma Is" by Ziya Gokalp was read to them in the classroom.

Fourth Sample:

*"Red Apple"*  
*The holly goal of Turks*  
*One day they will absolutely achieve it*  
*The sound of the strong steps of Turks*  
*Should shake all the enemies*  
*There is no fear in the heart of a Turk*  
*He scarifies himself for his country*  
*Do not think that you can leave unpunished*  
*Think is what will happen when they start to pursue you tomorrow*  
*The ideal of your ancestors should not be a dream*  
*This beautiful country should be established*  
*With the unity of Turks*  
*In every part of the land, the flag of Turks must wave."*

Fifth Sample:

*"Red Apple"*  
*"Red Apple" is the symbol of Turkish dominance in the world stemming from ancient beliefs and traditions. With the symbol of the red apple, absolute obedience of the army to the ruler and the rules of the government are emphasized. "Red Apple" is the destination to be arrived and the goal to be achieved. From the*

story of “Where Kizil Elma Is,” written by Omer Seyfettin, it is understood that Red Apple has been seen as the symbol and motif of the fighting spirit of the state and the people throughout the history. From the saying of Suleyman the Magnificent, “What is said by the folks is the saying of the God” is the indication of the importance attached to the opinions of the public by the ruler.”

**Table 5: Gender pretest**

	Mean	N	Standard deviation	t-value	Significance
Female	65.42	35	14.31	3.679	p <0.00
Male	53.28	35	13.28		

As can be seen in Tables 5 and 6, creative writing samples produced in the present study resulted in significant differences in both female and male students. The post-test results of both female and male students varied significantly after they were confronted with the works of art.

**Table 6: Gender posttest**

	Mean	N	Standard deviation	t-value	Significance
Female	85.28	35	9.77	4.456	p <0.000
Male	75.28	35	8.98		

## DISCUSSION

A literary work is no longer a possession of the writer when it reaches its readers. The knowledge base of the reader, namely the receptor, is reconstructed based on some factors such as his/her mastery of language, familiarity with the culture in which the text is written, and the mood of the reader. From that point on, writing skill gains originality on the basis of the knowledge base of the receptor. In the present study, as a result of the investigation of the act of completing the half-written texts by the students from the department of Turkish language teaching in terms of creativity, a significant difference was found between the students' pre-test and post-test results.

In the present study, some suggestions are made based on the evaluation of the writings of the students produced after reading a poem or a text written by a famous author in terms of creative writing elements about interpretation theory and creative writing.

Analysis of the students' written products revealed the importance of interpretation theory in terms of the review of a text based on the student's schemata and accordingly expressing his/her feelings and thoughts in a creative manner. Within the context of the interpretation theory, the students' comprehension and interpretation of the texts were converted into creativity to the extent determined by their knowledge base. The importance of literary texts in the formation of their knowledge base was revealed by the significant difference found between the pre-test and post-test results. This indicates that for students to develop their creative writing skills, they need to become familiar with literary texts. Thus, the Turkish language course books should include literary texts. The results of a study by Akdal D. and Sahin A. (2014: 181) show that an intertextual reading approach applied to the test group is effective in improving students' creative writing skills in terms of “vocabulary richness.” Alacapin's (2013: 2) thoughts on the topic include, “Teachers, parents may be required to undergo training related to creativity. Students with ordinary thoughts and opinions should not be mocked. In addition, the educational environment of creativity is developed to project technique, brainstorming, multiple intelligence, the decision-making process, the station technique, case studies, problem-solving, systematic training should be given more frequently and should be done in an enriched environment. Students who demonstrate creative products should be rewarded in various ways.”

Diliduzgun (2013: 205) said, “At the end of the process of the writing instruction prospective, Turkish teachers have witnessed the development in their writing skills and the effect and necessity of process writing activities, and they believe in the fact that writing should be taught. Reading studies should not be limited by comprehension questions; instead, they should include the analysis of the aim, point of view, plan, unity, and coherence of text, and briefly explain how the text is written. When the students get to know this process, they can consciously write their own texts. When students write essays,

they need to know where to begin, what to do at every step, and what they are expected to do. Process writing activities with the guidance of the teacher helps them to find the answers to those questions. To realize what has to be done is to train the teacher to become equipped with process writing knowledge and skills, which requires such courses in education faculties and to reflect theoretical knowledge in Turkish textbooks.”

Diliduzgun states, “The secret of reading is that while reading a text for the first time, the mind continuously asks some questions to be answered by the text. These are questions asked by the unconscious mind. If one can systematize asking questions and getting consistent answers, then that is wonderful.” In order to conduct a healthy review, field trips and observation methods should also be exercised. These can also contribute to the enhancement of the students’ schemata and, subsequently to their spiritual and cognitive development, and all of these will have positive effects on expression skills.

In the present study, in light of the perception theory, samples of creative writing were analyzed. Within the context of interpretation theory, the students’ interpretation of the literary texts and the reflections of these interpretations on the students’ writing skills were explored. The students’ grade level, their schemata, how many times they encountered the text and their mood during the activities naturally affect the extent to which their perceptions find reflections on their writing skills.

For instance, based on the play, “Husn u Ask” written by Seyh Galip in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Kenan Isik wrote a play called “Ask Hastasi,” which was staged by Ankara State Theatre and is a good example of a review. Another good example of a review is the ballet show in which Sems and Mevlana was reinterpreted and staged by Izmir State Opera and Ballet.

### CONCLUSION

After the students were exposed to the literary works, improvements in their written works were observed in terms of fluency, consistency and originality in the expression of feelings and thoughts. It is of great importance to help students improve their knowledge base and present the experiences they gain from their environment

in different ways. Making students acquire the objectives of the program and adding creativity to this is not an easy task. It is of great importance to help students form a knowledge base and display their experiences gained from their environment in a different manner. Thus, creative writing activities based on interpretation theory should be incorporated into the curriculum. As is well known, during the comprehension process, the reader understands and interprets the text within the context of his/her knowledge base, experiences and expectations. A literary work is not a possession of the writer any more when it reaches its readers. The knowledge base of the reader, namely the receptor, is reconstructed based on some factors such as his/her mastery of language, familiarity with the culture in which the text is written and mood of the reader. Thus, the writing skill gains originality on the basis of the knowledge base of the receptor.

In reading comprehension education, the goal is to reach the main gist of the text from what is said by the surface structure. One cannot assign certain meaning to what is said in the text because, in today’s world of literature and art, the text does not have a frozen meaning.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this work is to develop skills through the activities of individuals who think they are creative and who make creative products and solutions. Turkish language courses are very important for individuals to acquire their language and especially their self-expression skills. In order to foster the students’ creativity in these courses, consistent writing activities should be done in line with a process-based approach.

For students to form their own knowledge base, they need to express themselves and be confronted with literary works. By drawing the attention of students to the language and style in literary works, their awareness should be raised. This also happens through exposure to enhanced writing activities that improve their knowledge base. Products of creative writing activities should be shared by reading aloud in class and then by giving feedback. The students’ creative writing skills can be improved in these ways.

Performing activities for the correct review of the text is essential. Students’ perceptions of literary texts are different from each other and these

differences can be seen in their creative writings. Like writing skills, creative writing skills can too be developed. The literary power observed in the poems of the prominent poets of Turkish literature, in particular, can provide a driving force for students' creative writing. In this study, the significant difference found between pre-test and post-test results to determine the results of the students is remarkable.

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