The Effects Of Drama-Supported Cooperative Learning Method On The Development Of Pre-School Children’s Communication Skills

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Abstract

The aim of the present study is to investigate into the effects of drama-supported cooperative learning on the development of 5-6-year-old children’s communication skills. The study was carried out with a total of 24 students, 12 in the experimental group and 12 in the control group, attending a nursery school in Bursa in the 2011-2012 educational year. In the study, the Communication Skills Questionnaire developed by Görgülü (2009), the Personal Information Form included in the MNE 2006 Regulations and the “Personal Information Form” used by Gömlekçiz (1997) before were used as data collection tools. The Personal Information Form and the Communication Skills Scale were filled by the teachers of the students included in the experimental and control groups in the pre-test stage. After the pre-test stage, the students composing the experimental group were applied the drama-supported cooperative method activities and those in the control group were applied the drama activities included in the MNE pre-school program for eight weeks. At the end of this duration, the Communication Skills Questionnaire was filled once again by the classroom teachers by taking the changes in the students into consideration. In the study, as statistical techniques, the independent samples t-test and covariance analysis were employed to the pre-test and post-test scores obtained from the communication skills scale. In the analyses, as the significance level, p<.05 was taken. As a result, in terms of the total scores obtained from the verbal communication skills sub-scale of the communication skills scale, significant differences were found in favor of the experimental group. In terms of the total scores obtained from the non-verbal, avoidance of communication barriers and polite communication skills sub-scales, no significant differences were observed between the experimental and the control groups.

Keywords: Cooperative Learning, Drama in Education, Communication Skills, Communication Skills Scale, Pre-School Education

Introduction

Education is basically a communication activity. Learning is a change occurring in the receiver’s behavior as a result of the realization of communication and learning can be considered apart from communication (Güçlü, 2003). Education is an important process because it helps societies develop, affects individuals' lives directly and...
contributes to the formation of social structure. Knowledge, skills, habits, attitudes and values acquired as a result of education are supposed not only to meet current needs but also to be able to solve future problems (Özbek 2005). Game underlies drama. The child generally perceives drama activity as a game and since he or she perceives it like this, he or she concentrates all his or her energy and attention, as it is during the game, on this activity. Thus the child finds the opportunity both to play a game and to learn a lot of concepts, topics and social behaviors more effectively (Ömeroğlu et al., 2003). Creative drama activities create a natural game environment where children manifest their emotions (Gönen, 2002). Educational drama is a synthesis of movement, feeling, language, communication and thought. It has a structure giving place to elements constituting this synthesis and including different practicing stages (Önder, 2007). To start educational drama, the previous stage should be finished. In this stage, a game to be played should be explained to children and casting should be made by the teacher. Educational drama activities may function as a very feasible tool in the hands of preschool teachers with its examples based on life about the matter of teaching of communication behaviors apart from speaking and writing (Önder, 2003). Creative drama is a powerful alternative to educational understanding which is topic-centered, based on rote-learning and structured. It aims to develop creativity inherent in a child. Loading a child with knowledge and shaping him or her according to certain patterns does not fit for this purpose. Drama provides children with various experiences and makes them acquire different points of view (Ömeroğlu et al., 2003). In the preschool period, during which growth undergoes very rapid changes, the aims of creative drama are listed as follows: it develops the feeling of trust and decision making processes; helps people get to know themselves; helps them express their feelings and thoughts in appropriate ways; helps them achieve their creativity and esthetical development; develops their cooperation skills; has them acquire new experiences and gives them the opportunity to use their experiences; supports them in the direction of taking a more active part in life; achieves permanent behavioral changes; supports the development of social values; helps people acquire a tolerant attitude by paying attention to others’ similar and different characteristics; achieves the development of the feeling of responsibility; has people acquire language and communication skills; develops power of imagination; makes them perceive phenomena and events around them better by developing their observation skills; develops their perception skills by transforming abstract concepts into concrete experiences, makes them relate events; contributes to the versatile development of the body by making people know their bodies and learn how to use their organs; has people acquire different points of view by evaluating people and events in a multidirectional way (Hornbrook, 1988; Üstündağ, 1998; Gönen, 1999; cited by Ömeroğlu et al., 2003). Cooperative learning is a learning approach in which students, in a classroom environment, form small mixed groups in the direction of a common goal and help each other learn about an academic topic group success is rewarded in different ways (Gömleksiz, 1997; cited by Kayıran, 2007). There are nine basic principles discriminating cooperative learning from other approaches. These are group goals, individual responsibility, positive dependency, face-to-face supportive interaction, social skills, evaluation of group functioning, group size, mixed group and equal opportunity for success (Karabay, 2005). This study aims to determine the effects of cooperative learning method and drama method on children receiving preschool education and investigate into the effects drama-assisted cooperative learning activities in preschool education in Turkey on 6-year-old children. The study tried to determine the effects of the methods of drama and cooperative learning on children’s communication skills by taking information about their gender and family into consideration.

2. Purpose
This study aims to determine the effects of cooperative learning method and drama method on children receiving preschool education and investigate into the effects drama-assisted cooperative learning activities in preschool education in Turkey on 6-year-old children. The study tried to determine the effects of the methods of drama and cooperative learning on children’s communication skills by taking information about their gender and family into consideration.

3. Method
In this study, as a data collection tool, the Communication Skills Scale developed by Görgülü (2009) was administered to the students in the experimental and control groups in pretest and post-test. To collect data about the children’s gender, number of siblings, parents’ jobs, parents’ education levels, the Personal Information Form was used. When developing the Personal Information Form, it was benefited from the one which Görgülü (2009)
used in his master’s thesis, the one in the MNE 2006 Regulations and the one previously used by Gömleksiz (1997).

3.1. Sample

The sample of the study was composed of 24 pupils receiving education in a nursery school during the first semester of the 2011-2012 Educational Year and included in the 6-age afternoon group. 12 of 24 pupils composed the experimental group (the group to whom the drama-assisted cooperative learning activities in education were administered) and 12 composed the control group (the group to whom the drama activities included in preschool education program were administered). According to t-test results, it is observed that there is no significant difference between the means of the sub-scales of the communication skills which was administered to the control and experimental groups in pretest. The personal information form includes the variables of gender, age, family structure, parents’ education levels, parents’ jobs, number of siblings, birth order, and enrollment year in the preschool educational institution of the children included in the study group. The variables related to pupils’ families in which they live and people with whom they live together may affect children’s learning levels. For this reason, it is important that the children in the experimental and control groups have similar characteristics. Below are given the pieces of information including quantitative data about these variables. In terms of gender, it is observed that there are 6 girls in the experimental group and 7 girls in the control group. It is also observed that there are 6 boys in the experimental group and 5 boys in the control group. The number of 5-year-old control group pupils is 7 and that of the experimental group pupils is 6. When it is looked at the 6-year-old group, it is observed that there are 6 in the experimental group and 5 in the control group. When it is looked at the number of siblings in the control group, it is observed that the number of those who are only child is higher than that of those with one or two siblings and in the experimental group the number of those with one sibling is higher than that of those who are only child and those with two siblings. As for the educational status of the mothers of the pupils included in the experimental and control groups, it is observed that the elementary school graduates are more in number in the experimental group, the junior high school graduates are equal in number in the experimental and control groups, and there are no vocational school graduates in the experimental group. When it is looked at the father educational status, it is observed that the distribution of graduation status is equal in the experimental and control groups. When it is examined in terms of the mothers’ jobs, it is observed that the great majority of the mothers of the pupils in the experimental and control groups are housewives. When the professions of the fathers are examined, it is observed that the fathers of the pupils included in the experimental and control groups are mostly self-employed. Moving from the data obtained, it can be stated that the experimental group and the control group have similar characteristics.

4. Findings

When the weighted means and standard deviation values of the pre-test and post-test score means relating to the verbal communication skills sub-scale of the communication skills scale of the pupils included in the experimental and control groups are examined, it is observed that the experimental group pre-test score means is 3.5556, post-test mean is 4.5556, and the control group pre-test score mean is 3.6574 and post-test score mean is 3.9537. To determine if there is a difference between the groups’ verbal communication skills sub-scale post-test score means, ANCOVA was applied between the post-test implementation level score means by taking the pre-test score means under control. A significant difference is observed between the groups’ corrected post-test score means (F=5.234, p=.039). When it is looked at the weighted means, standard deviation values of the experimental and control group pupils’ pretest-posttest score means from the non-verbal communication sub-scale of the communication skills scale and the corrected post-test score means and standard error values obtained as a result of the ANCOVA, it is observed that the experimental group pretest score mean is 3.69, and post-test mean is 2.09, and the control group pretest score mean is 4.19 and post-test score mean is 2.23. To determine if there is a difference between the groups’ non-verbal communication skills sub-scale post-test score means, ANCOVA was applied between the post-test score means by taking the pre-test score means under control. It is observed that there is not a difference between the groups in terms of the implementation level corrected post-test score means (F=7.101, p=.470). When it is looked at the weighted means, standard deviation values of the experimental and control groups’ pretest-posttest score means taken from the effective communication sub-scale of the communication skills scale and the corrected post-test score means obtained as a result of ANCOVA and the
standard error values, it is observed that the experimental group pre-test score mean is 2.80 and post-test mean is 4.55, and the control group pre-test score mean is 1.88 and post-test mean is 4.33. To determine if there is a difference between the groups’ avoiding communication barriers sub-scale post-test score means, ANCOVA was applied between the post-test implementation level score means by taking pre-test implementation level score means under control. It is observed that there is a difference between the groups in terms of the corrected post-test score means (F=7.33, p=.478). When it is looked at the weighted means, standard deviation values of the experimental and control groups’ pretest-posttest score means taken from the politeness sub-scale of the communication skills scale and the corrected post-test score means obtained as a result of ANCOVA and the standard error values, it is observed that the experimental group pre-test score mean is 4.63 and post-test score mean is 4.63 and the control group’s pre-test score mean is 4.03 and post-test score mean is 4.16. To determine if there is a difference between the groups’ politeness-themed communication skills sub-scale post-test score means, ANCOVA was applied between the post-test implementation level score means by taking pre-test implementation level score means under control. It is observed that there was not a significant difference between the groups in terms of the corrected post-test score means (F=3.44, p=.301).

5. Conclusion

When the findings obtained from the study were examined, the following results were reached:

1. There are significant differences in favor of the experimental group between the experimental group to whom the drama-assisted cooperative learning in education activities were administered and the control group to whom the MNE preschool education program activities were administered in terms of the scores obtained by subtracting the pre-test scores from the post-test scores obtained from the “verbal skills” sub-scale of the communication skills scale.

2. There are no significant differences in favor of the experimental group between the experimental group to whom the drama-assisted cooperative learning in education activities were administered and the control group to whom the MNE preschool education program activities were administered in terms of the scores obtained by subtracting the pre-test scores from the post-test scores obtained from the “non-verbal skills” sub-scale of the communication skills scale.

3. There are significant differences in favor of the experimental group between the experimental group to whom the drama-assisted cooperative learning in education activities were administered and the control group to whom the MNE preschool education program activities were administered in terms of the scores obtained by subtracting the pre-test scores from the post-test scores obtained from the “avoiding communication barriers” sub-scale of the communication skills scale.

4. There are no significant differences in favor of the experimental group between the experimental group to whom the drama-assisted cooperative learning in education activities were administered and the control group to whom the MNE preschool education program activities were administered in terms of the scores obtained by subtracting the pre-test scores from the post-test scores obtained from the “politeness-themed communication” sub-scale of the communication skills scale.

5. In a study, Avcıoğlu (2004) investigated if the social skills teaching program prepared based on the cooperative learning method had any effects on preschool children’s listening skills, verbal explanation skills and learning interpersonal skills. The plan arranged in accordance with these skills and based on the cooperative learning method was applied in a total of 23 sessions, each lasted for 40 minutes and applied twice a week. 14 students ranging in age from 4 to 6 years old participated in the study. As a result of the study, the social skills teaching program developed in the direction the cooperative learning method, it was found to have an effect on the students’ developing their targeted social skills (cited by Görgülü, 2009). This finding supports the one obtained from the study that the cooperative learning method develops communication skills.

By taking the results obtained from this study, the followings can be suggested for future studies;

1- This study was limited to 24 students and 8 teachers observing their communication skills. The number of students and observers can be increased.
2- This study was carried out in an independent nursery school. The same study can be applied to nursery schools connected to elementary schools and differences between nursery school students and nursery class students can be observed.

3- In this study, the cooperative learning method was supported with the drama activity. By using other teaching methods, contribution can be made to the development of students’ communication skills as well.

References