Assessment of Written Expression Skills of University Students in Terms of Text Completion Technique [1]

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ABSTRACT

Writing is to transfer the visualised ideas on the paper. Writing, one of the language skills, is a significant tool of communication which provides the permanency of information conveying emotions and thoughts. Since writing has both cognitive and physical aspects, it makes writing the hardest and the latest language skill to improve. The studies show that writing activity is the most difficult skill students have difficulty. In higher education, in order to improve writing skills of students and give basic information and skills about writing skills written expression, composition and writing education lessons are taught both in the department of Turkish Language and Literature and in the departments of Turkish Language in the Faculties of Education. One of the aims of these lessons is to teach students written expression techniques together with the purposes and practices. One of the written expression techniques is text completion skill that improves student's creativity and enhances her/his imaginary world. The purpose of this study is to assess students' skills of using text completion technique with reference to the writing studies of students in higher education. the sample of the study consists of 85 college students studying in the department of Turkish Language and Literature in Gümüşhane University in 2016-2017 academic year. The data of the study were obtained from the written expression studies of the students. The introduction part of the article 'On Reading' by F. Bacon was given to the students and they were required to complete the text. 'Text Completion Rating Scale in Writing Expression' was developed to assess the data of the study by taking opinions of lecturers and Turkish education experts. The data of the study were presented with percentage and frequency rates. At the end of the study, it was concluded that students had weakness in some skills such as writing an effective body part about the topic given in the text, narrating the subject matter in logical coherence, segueing properly among paragraphs, comprehending the main theme and writing connective and impressive conclusion.

Key Words: Higher Education Students, Written Expression Works, Text Completion Skills.

1. Introduction

Compared with past, the ability of self-expression of individuals has become more significant. The ability of expressing one's feelings, opinions and experiences effectively and properly is not only the vital need of educated people but also the need of individuals in every phase of their daily lives. In rapidly developing world, learning new information and keeping it in mind, reviewing this information so as to use it when needed and expressing it via verbal or written expression is related with language skills (Yalçın, 2002: 21).

An individual who graduated from a higher education institution should be improving his/her language skills at a level to meet her/his daily needs (Coşkun, 2005: 31). Individuals who cannot

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convey her/his feelings, knowledge and opinions in verbal and written form grammatically and efficiently have difficulty both in social life and professional career.

Nowadays, writing skill requires knowledge and ability at different levels in all areas of life, both in daily life and professional career. Since writing expression is a general need apart from the academic life of an individual, and since they wish to be successful in their academic lives, written expression is a field that everybody needs in society (Arıcı, 2008: 210).

It was detected with the studies that primary, secondary and high school and especially higher education students are not successful enough in composition and written expression courses in our country. Students' having difficulty in expressing their opinions in written form results from that they have not sufficient knowledge about the topic (Fink-Chorzempa ad., 2005: 66).

In general, students who have gained a chance to study in Turkish Language and Literature Department in our country have inadequate vocabulary, get difficulty in using and understanding of figure of speech and metaphors which shows the wealth of expression of Turkish language and all of these show us that we could not succeed in educating students knowing how to use their mother tongue in verbal and written form effectively. (Tural, 1992: 43; Kaplan, 1972: 9; Güzel, 1987: 436-437, Bağcı, 2007: 31). The fact that there are students who can hardly get a success about 50 % for Turkish questions in the university exam affirms these statements (Bağcı, 2007; 31).

Turkish Language and Literature candidate teachers who will perform mother tongue education program in the institutions like secondary schools and high schools should be able to use the language verbally and in written form in an effective way. In this regard, they should primarily have adequate knowledge and skills in this field. Since all the lessons are taught by mother tongue, teachers and teaching language become more important (Marshall, 1994: 12-13).

According to Şişman (1999:12) a good teacher should use native language effectively and have strong communication skills. Only individuals who have improved his/her native language can use it as an effective thinking, learning and communication tool. Hereby, Turkish and literature teachers have great responsibility. Teachers should improve their speaking and listening skills to educate individuals who know to speak better and listen efficiently (Sever, 1998: 54)

Written expression, composition and writing education lessons are taught both in the department of Turkish Language and Literature and in the department of Turkish Language in the Faculties of Education and Literatures in higher education institutions so that Turkish Language and Literature teacher candidates could have their students acquire targeted language skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing). The most important feature required for teachers giving their students native language education is undoubtedly their ability to use the native language effectively in written form and verbally (Bağcı, 2007; 32). Along with being qualified it is imperative for teachers in all branches especially for Turkish Language and Literature teachers to train both themselves and their students (Kavcar, 1998: 14). According to Şişman (199:12) a good native language teacher should be able to use the language well and have good communication skills. Because, especially Turkish Language and Literature teaching is a branch which necessitates special interest and skill. In this respect, teachers of this field should be trained more carefully and meticulously.

One of the fields that modern linguistics focused on in 1970s is text linguistics which aims individuals to have required level in terms of verbal and written expression. Text linguistics is a discipline of composition which analyses a written text and provides the text to be understood clearer and more permanently and to comprehend the deep and surface structures used in creation of a text (Coşkun, 2005; 31). The aim of this newly-emerging discipline is not to bring a new approach into writing studies but to facilitate the description of the used language in text.

The aim and importance of Study

Writing, one of the four language skills, is transferring information visualised in mind onto paper. Since writing has both physical and cognitive aspects, it is the latest and hardest language skill. Thinking has an important place in writing activities. Thinking is on the other hand a product arising from as a result of certain experiences (Yıldız, Okur, Arı and Yılmaz 2008:203, İşeri and Ünal, 2012: 68). Text completion technique, one of the written expression techniques, has recently been one of the most used techniques in terms of students' creative thinking and imagination. According to Graham and Perin (2009;9) a text consists of two different elements such as enlarging imagination and knowledge of students and reviewing text.

The purpose of this study is to determine students' ability to use text completion technique which aims to exhibit creative thinking and imagination of students in higher education. In accordance with this purpose, the issues below were questioned to be answered.

1. Ability to write effective body passage about the topic given in a text.

2. Expression levels in terms of subject, logical consistency and coherence.

3. Segueing properly among paragraphs

4. Analysing only an idea or an emotion in each paragraph

5. Telling about only an idea or an emotion in each paragraph

6. Finding the main theme given in a writing

7. Supporting the main theme with secondary ideas and emotions

8. Adequate quotation, samples and images that are coherent with content

9. Students' using the features of article types

10. The level of writing connective and impressive conclusion

11. Correct usage and expression of words

12. Telling about the subject with distinctive expressions.

2. Method

Document review model, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. Document review includes analysis of written materials that involves information about fact or facts targeted to be search. Document review is an inevitable data collecting tool for almost each study (Madge,1965; 75). For that purpose, the data were evaluated both qualitatively and quantitively.

Study Group

The study group consists of 85 students, who study in the department of Turkish Language and Literature in Gümüşhane University in 2016-2017 academic year.

Collecting Data

The introduction part of the article 'On Reading' by F. Bacon was given to the students and they were required to complete the text. 'Text Completion Rating Scale in Writing Expression' was developed to evaluate the data of the study by taking opinions of lecturers and Turkish education experts. The data of the study were obtained by means of written documents taken by students and by 'Text Completion Rating Scale in Writing Expression' used in evaluation of these documents.

Data Collection Tools

Skills about each field were shown with frequency and average rates as tables in the evaluation carried out by means of 'Text Completion Rating Scale in Writing Expression'. The percentage (%) and frequency (f) analysis were utilized in the findings related with text completion level of the students in writing practices.

3. Findings and Comments

In this chapter, findings and comments obtained from 'Text Completion Rating Scale in Writing Expression' are given.

Table 1: Findings about 'Ability to write effective body about the topic given in the text.'

Ability to write effective body about the topic given in the text	*f*	%
	23	27

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that their ability to write effective body about the introduction part was low at a rate of 27 %. It was observed that 62 students participating in the study couldn't write a body part in written expression texts.

Table 2: Findings about 'Expression levels in terms of subject, logical consistency and coherence.

Expression levels in terms of subject, logical consistency and coherence.	*f*	%
	32	37,6

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that expressing levels in terms of subject, logical consistency and coherence was low at a rate of 37,6 %. It was observed that 53 students participating in the study couldn't express and write about the subject within a logical consistency in written expression texts.

Table 3: Findings about 'Segueing properly among paragraphs'

Segueing properly among paragraphs	*f*	%
	36	42,35

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that segueing properly among paragraphs was low at a rate of 42,35 %. It was observed that 49 students participating in the study couldn't segue properly among paragraphs.

Table 4: Findings about 'Analysing only an idea or an emotion in each paragraph'

Analysing only an idea or an emotion in each paragraph'	*f*	%
	18	21,1

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that analysing only an idea or an emotion in each paragraph was low at a rate of 21,1 %. It was observed that 67 students participating in the study couldn't analyse an idea or an emotion in each paragraph.

Table 5: Findings about 'Finding the main theme given in a writing

Finding the main theme given in a writing	*f*	%
	26	30,58

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that finding the main theme in a writing was low at a rate of 30,58 %. It was observed that 59 students participating in the study couldn't find the main theme in a writing.

Table 6: Findings about 'Supporting the main theme with secondary ideas and emotions'

Supporting the main theme with secondary ideas and emotions	*f*	%
	46	54,1

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that supporting the main theme with secondary ideas and emotions was low at a rate of 54,1 %. It was observed that 39 students participating in the study couldn't support the main theme with secondary ideas and emotions.

Table 7: Findings about 'Adequate quotation, sample and images that are coherent with content.'

Adequate quotation, sample and images that are coherent with content.	*f*	%
	49	57,6

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that ability of using adequate quotation, sample and images and coherent with content was low at a rate of 57,6 %. It was observed that 36 students participating in the study couldn't use adequate quotation, samples and images that are coherent with content.

Table 8: Findings about 'Students' using the features of article types

Students' using the features of article types	*f*	%
	19	22,3

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that students' using the features of article types was low at a rate of 22,3 %. It was observed that 66 students participating in the study couldn't reflect the features of essay.

Table 9: Findings about 'The level of writing connective and impressive conclusion'

The level of writing connective and impressive conclusion	*f*	%
	28	32,9

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that the level of writing connective and impressive conclusion was low at a rate of 32,9 %. It was observed that 57 students participating in the study couldn't write connective and impressive conclusion.

Table 10: Findings about 'Correct usage and expression of words'

Correct usage and expression of words	*f*	%
	59	69,4

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that correct usage and expression of words was low at a rate of 69,4 %. It was observed that 26 students participating in the study couldn't use the words correctly.

Table 11: Findings about 'Telling about the subject with distinctive expressions'

Telling about the subject with distinctive expressions'	*f*	%
	64	75,2

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was detected that telling about a subject with distinctive expressions was low at a rate of 75,2 %. It was observed that 21 students participating in the study couldn't talk about a subject with distinctive expressions.

4. Conclusion and Discussion

In this study which aims to determine the students' level of text completion, one of the written expression techniques, it was detected that the great majority of higher education students (27%) could not write body part in written expression texts, about one of three (37,6%) couldn't express and write within logical consistency and coherence, few (30, 58%) could find the main theme in writing, approximately one fifth (22,3%) couldn't reflect the features of essay and some of them (32,9%) couldn't write connective and impressive conclusion.

When written expression texts of higher education students were examined, it was observed that 62 students couldn't write body part in written expression texts. In this regard, the students should be taught how to write an introduction and a body paragraph effectively in order to improve their success (Medina, 2006;190, Arıcı, 2008; 214).

It was observed that 53 students participating in the study couldn't express and write about a topic within logical consistency and coherence in written expression texts. One of the ways to be successful in written expression is to create a text with words and sentences within logical consistency and coherence. Sentences that create a text can't be written randomly, and they can't be independent and disconnected from each other in terms of meaning. Each sentence gains a meaning with building relations with other sentences. If a text has a unity in terms of components such as subject, theme, etc., it means this text is coherent (Coşkun, 2005: 105).

One of the rules to be obeyed in written expression is the ability to segue properly among paragraphs. It is necessary to put the thoughts in an order with a plan and to express them in the right place and properly (Dumaine, 2004; 53). It was detected that 67 % of higher education students were not successful on this topic.

Arıcı (2008), in his study "written expression faults of higher education students" examined the faults of higher education students from various aspects and determined that 37,3 % of the students made mistake in terms of language and expression and stated that the students didn't make any plan. Arıcı (2008) also stated in the same study that the students had problem especially in forming the beginning of writing.

Coşkun (2005) in his stud examined the students' coherency, consistency and using text elements in narrative expression and determined that in narrative expressions average consistency points of the students participating in the study was 3.1 out of 5 points. Coşkun and Tiryaki (2013), in their study 'skills of higher education students to write argumentative texts' examined the texts of 363 students and detected that they were successful by 34 %.

Bağcı (2007), in his study 'assessment of the attitudes of Turkish teacher candidates to written expression and written expression courses' studied on 570 students from 8 different universities and concluded that university students complained about their inabilities about written expression skills and they believed that they would have this problem all their professional lives. The results of these studies show similarities with this study.

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