An Evaluation of Preschool Children's Books with Respect to the Principle of Appropriateness for Children

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Abstract

This study aims to determine the suitability of the books to the principle of appropriateness for children. The research database, modelled in the form of case study, one of the qualitative methods, consists of a selection of 60 books that were randomly selected among the most read preschool children's books, targeting an audience aged 0 to 6 years. The data, which were organized using descriptive analysis, underwent a thorough examination through content analysis. Educational messages in the books presented explicitly and implicitly were also identified using the document analysis method, analyzed through the descriptive analysis method, and evaluated in terms of children's education and development. The cases in which the texts of pre-school children's books can be characterized as conflicting with the principle of appropriateness for children can be categorized as follows: errors in language and expression (spelling and punctuation mistakes; non-adherence to textuality criteria; inadequate attention to consistency; selection of words unsuited to children's cognitive development; and translation errors), errors related to images (image-text mismatch, or inconsistency between images), and errors concerning children's universe of meaning (explicit and implicit messages that diverge from values-oriented education). The results of the study were discussed in detail, supported by the relevant literature. As a result, to mitigate the potential adverse effects arising from errors in children's books, it becomes essential to follow the basic principles of children's literature as to the communication of explicit and implicit messages, to review books in detail before they are presented to children, and to organize the content accordingly.

Key Words

Principle of appropriateness for children • Preschool children's books • Child literature

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Concepts

The process of education begins within the familial context during the pre-school period, sustaining an uninterrupted trajectory throughout the entirety of an individual's lifespan. Among the foundational elements of family-based education in the pre-school period, parental engagement in reading books to their children stands out as a pivotal contributory factor. The input conveyed to children by means of books, serving as exemplars of children's literature, is recognized to wield a dual impact, contributing to children's cognitive, personal, and societal development, as well as to the cultivation of their language skills. Considering this rationale, it is anticipated that children's books should be composed with a profound sensitivity to their vantage point, in congruence with the authentic realm of children's experience. Children's books therefore diverge from the books intended for adult readers, necessitating the incorporation of distinct features and adherence to some essential principles (Sever, 2013b). The books directed at children must be tailored to align with the age range of the intended readership, while encompassing features capable of engaging the interest of young readers. The linguistic and expressive components embedded within children's books have the potential to enrich young readers' vocabulary and enhance their ability for eloquent self-expression. In this manner, the advancement of both receptive and productive language skills is facilitated. To this end, the content of a book should be interwoven with a logical structure, characterized by succinctness and comprehensibility, while also encompassing affirmative values (Hsiao & Chang, 2015). Ensuring logical and semantic integrity requires the meticulous selection of appropriate language and narrative elements for character and plot exposition, supplemented by visual components. Through the coherent incorporation of linguistic and visual elements in books, children can internalize words, lexical bundles, and set phrases that are commonly used. While selecting books, hence, it is important to consider language and expression aspects that cater to children's receptive language skills, ensuring that expressions, words, and images resonate with children's universe of meaning. Messages intended for children via books should resonate with their world of feelings and thoughts, ensuring a meaningful connection. Children's books characterized by these qualities hold the potential to nurture proficiency in language and communication skills.

Aside from their linguistic content, children's books stand as resources that demand careful attention with respect to their visual components. Particularly during the preschool phase, as children have yet to develop literacy skills. Therefore, their attention is predominantly directed towards visual messages rather than linguistic cues within books (Evans & Saint-Aubin, 2005). They derive semantic content by engaging with the visual depictions presented (Yaden et al., 1993), concretizing and assigning meaning to textual material through these images.

Rationale and Purpose of the Study

Children in the pre-school phase are initially acquainted with the act of reading through visual engagement with books. Prior to the initiation of primary literacy education, it therefore becomes essential to nurture children's visual literacy skills with an emphasis on the cultivation of conceptual maturation (Karatay, 2011; Sever, 2013a). Children's picture books are crucial in the development of visual literacy skills at an early age. Books featuring high-quality visuals additionally serve as a catalyst for fostering children's grasp of visual aesthetics. Therefore, in the

context of advancing receptive language skills, the alignment of content with visual components, the quality of images that derive meaning from content, and their associated implications all hold considerable significance.

The selection of visual and linguistic messages tailored for children, which should be guided by adherence to specific qualities, demands caution on the part of adults. Sever (2013b) asserts that the principal element in books intended for preschool children, in relation to both design and content, is the visual component, and this view is predicated on the fact that children mentally complete the narrative of the text through the visual depictions presented in the books. Nevertheless, it is evident that these attributes do not receive adequate consideration in the design of certain books. This research aims to analyze the educational messages conveyed through both visual and linguistic elements in these books, as well as to assess their alignment with the principle of appropriateness for children, fostering cognitive development, and enhancing language skills.

 The scholarly literature contains various studies that explore preschool children's books from diverse perspectives, including matters of values (Alpay & Tuna, 2021; Cengiz & Duran, 2017; Körükçü et al, 2016), aspects of form and content (Bakırcı, 2022; Bekkaya & Güven, 2021; Çolaklar, 2019; Gönen & Aydos, 2013; Gönen et al., 2014; Gönen et al., 2016; Körükçü, 2012; Turan & Ulutaş, 2016; Yıldız, 2016), and the criteria used by teachers, parents, and preschool children while selecting books (Can et al., 2022; Külcü, 2019; Maniam, 2011; Pekdoğan, 2017; Saçkesen, 2008; Turan et al., 2017; Ulutaş, 2017; Uslu, 2020; Yükselen et al., 2016). While these studies often include images in the external structural features (form) of the books, the messages conveyed within the books are typically limited to linguistic means and are primarily evaluated within the internal structural aspects (content) of the books. Nonetheless, it should be posited that the messages examined within the internal structural aspects of books are not to be confined solely to linguistic structure, and the complementary nature of visual reading in enhancing linguistic content and meaning underscores the need for a holistic understanding of meaning. There are also studies in the literature that examine children's books according to the principle of suitability for children (Bilgin, 2011; Burç, 2013; Çakır, 2013; Karaca & Temizyürek, 2017; Özer, 2007; Yeniçeri & Kuşdemir, 2019).

This study endeavors to highlight the semantic implications, values, and educational elements embedded within the linguistic and visual content conveyed to children through the medium of books. Aligned with these objectives, it sought to address the following research questions:

i. How can the linguistic and visual messages in preschool children's books be evaluated in terms of the principle of appropriateness for children?

ii. What factors within the context of preschool children's books exert adverse effects on children's universe of meaning?

Method

Research Design

Adopting the qualitative approach, this study is designed using the case study model. This model, distinguished as a unique design for the qualitative approach (Creswell, 2020; Silverman, 2018; Stake, 1995), aims to achieve a close and profound comprehension and manifestation of an individual or a few select situations (Yin, 2017). The

case study facilitates the examination of a present-day phenomenon within its authentic contextual framework (Merriam, 2018). This design is well-suited for circumstances where the objective is twofold: to address descriptive/explanatory research questions and to facilitate the need for thorough evaluation (Silverman, 2018; Yin, 2017). The unit of analysis under examination in this study revolves around the visual and linguistic messages contained in picture books tailored for preschool children. In instances involving multiple units of analysis, emphasis is placed on the specific subunit or subunits within the given context. This scenario facilitates the exposition of intertwined situations (Yin, 2017). Consequently, this study is designed in the form of an interwoven single case study.

Research Instruments and Data Collection Processes

The data in this study were collected using the document analysis method. The research database comprises a total of 60 different books, randomly selected from a collection of widely read preschool children's books published by 10 different publishing houses, all of which are among the best-selling publishers targeting children aged 0-6 years.Table 1 shows the preschool children's books that constitute the database of the study. All textual and visual elements present in the books, which form the core review materials of this study, have been evaluated within the parameters of the study's limitations.

Table 1

The preschool children's books that constitute the database of the study

Publication	Book	Original/English Name of the Book	Writer	Illustrator	Code
İşbank	İyi Yürekli Dev	The Smartest Giant in Town	Julia Donaldson	Axel Scheffler	B1
	Büyüdüğüm Zaman	When I Grow Up	Melanie Joyce	Lizzie Walkley	B2
	Akıllı Tilkinin Masalı	No Matter What	Debi Gliori	Debi Gliori	B3
	Hayvanat Bahçesinde Diş Fırçalama Günü	Der Grosse Zahnputztag Im Zoo	Sophie Schoenwald	Günther Jakobs	B4
	İşte Ben!	Exactly Like Me	Stephanie Moss	Gail Yerrill	B5
	Sevginin Gücü	The Pover of Love	Caroline Richards	Louise Anglicas	B6
Yapı Kredi	İyi Geceler Ay	Goognight Moon	Margaret Wise Brown	Clement Hurd	B7
	Ay'ı Kim Çaldı?	Who Stole the Moon?	Helen Stratton Would	Vlad Gerasimov	B8
	Ejderhalar da Tuvalete Gider mi?	Plassen draken ook?	Stefan Boonen	Hiky Helmantel	B9
	Bir Karın Dolusu Sır	Een buik vol geheimen	Pimm Van Hest	Nynke Talsma	B10
	Kendini Çok Seven Kurt	Le loup quı s'aımaıt beaucoup trop	Orianne Lallemand	Êlêono Thuillier	B11

	Uzaylılarla Adım Adım	A spasso con gli alieni	Emanuele Cirani	Ilaria Guarducci	B12
Beyaz Balina	Şşşt! Sessiz Olun!	Shhh! Quiet!	Nicola Kinnear	Nicola Kinnear	B13
	Seni Çok Seviyorum Kokuşuk Surat	I Love You Stinky Face	Lisa McCourt	Cyd Moore	B14
	Ben Sandalye Değilim!	I Am Not a Chair	Ross Burach	Ross Burach	B15
	Yağmurlu Bir Gün	Quick, Barney, Run!	Pip Jones	Laura Hughes	B16
	Kütüphane Tavşanı	Bunny's Book Club	Annie Silvestro	Tatjana Mai-Wyss	B17
	Dev Civciv	Chicken Big	Keith Graves	Keith Graves	B18
Mikado	Doktor Çantam	Mein Doktorkoffer	Luise Holthausen	Marlit Peikert	B19
	Dalgıç Köpek	Scuba Dog	Ann Marie Stephens	Jess Golden	B20
	Yemek Yiyorum	Eat Up, Maxie and Millie	Felicity Brooks	Desideria Guicciardini	B21
	Ben Küçük Değilim!	I'm Not Little	Alison Inches	Gleen Thomas	B22
	Louis'in Yendiği Gün	The Day Louis Got Eaten	John Fardell	John Fardell	B23
	Lorenzo Pizza Seven Istakoz	Lorenzo, The Pizza Loving Lobster	Claire Lordon	Claire Lordon	B24
Sincap	Ormana Dokun	Touch the Forest	Melek Dinçer	Damla Tutan	B25
	Çiftliğe Dokun	Touch the Farm	Melek Dinçer	Damla Tutan	B26
	Merhaba Duygularım	Hello My Feelings	Asiye Aslı Aslaner	Dilek Altıntaş Birben	B27
	Ormanda Saklambaç	Hide and Seek in the Forest	Serap Armutlu Acar	Dilek Altıntaş Birben	B28
	Çiftlikte Saklambaç	Hide and Seek on the Farm	Serap Armutlu Acar	Dilek Altıntaş Birben	B29
	Dolu Botlar	Plein Les Bottes	Leila Brient	Leila Brient	B30
Doğan Egmont	Bugün Ne Olalım? Harika Hayvan	I Want to Be-Amazing Animal	Ian Cunliffe	Ian Cunliffe	B31
	Bugün Ne Olalım? Mutlu Yardımcı	I Want to Be-A Happy Helper	Ian Cunliffe	Ian Cunliffe	B32
	Bugün Ne Olalım? Muhteşem Maceracı	I Want to Be-An Awesome Adventurer	Ian Cunliffe	Ian Cunliffe	B33
	Bugün Ne Olalım? Çılgın Yaratık	I Want to Be-A Crazy Creature	Ian Cunliffe	Ian Cunliffe	B34
	Burundaki Parmak	El Dedo En La Nariz	Paula Merlan	Ana Gomez	B35

	Dünyanın En Büyük Pırtı	El pedo mas grande del mundo / The World's Biggest Fart	Rafael Ordóñez	Laure du Fäy	B36
Marsık	Kaplanı Sakın Gıdıklama	Never Tickle a Tiger	Pamela Butchart	Marc Boutavant	B37
	Kral Leo'nun Oyuncak Ayusu	King Leonard's Teddy	Phoebe Swan	Phoebe Swan	B38
	Göl Kıyısında Bir Tatil	Een vacantie aan het meer	Florence Ducatteau	Chantal Peten	B39
	Büyüyorum ve Değişiyorum	Mariposa. Crezco y me transformo /I grow and transform	Pierre-Marie Valat	Pierre-Marie Valat	B40
	Bak Sen Şu Kedilere	All About Cats	Monika Filipina	Monika Filipina	B41
	Sesini Arayan Papağan Oskar	Harold finds a voice	Courtney Dicmas	Courtney Dicmas	B42
Butik	Cesur Minik Rakun	Chester The Brave	Audrey Penn	Barbara L. Gibson	B43
	Minik Rakun Arkadaşında Yatıya Kalıyor	Chester Raccoon and the Almost Oerfect Sleepover	Audrey Penn	Barbara L. Gibson	B44
	Minik Rakun Renk Oyunu	A Color Game for Chester Raccoon	Audrey Penn	Barbara L. Gibson	B45
	Minik Rakun ve İri, Kötü, Zorba	Chester Raccoon and the Big Bad Bully	Audrey Penn	Barbara L. Gibson	B46
	Bir Cep Dolusu Öpücük	A Pocket Full of Kisses	Audrey Penn	Ruth E. Harper & Nancy M. Leak	B47
	Minik Rakun İçin Öpülecek Bir El	A Kissing Hand for Chester Raccoon	Audrey Penn	Barbara L. Gibson	B48
Net	Sınırlarım ve Sırlarım	My Limits and Secrets	Yaşam Yanardağ Çelik	Berk Öztürk	B49
	Çocuklar için Cinsel Eğitim Öyküleri	Sex Education Stories for Children	Yaşam Yanardağ Çelik	Hülya Günal	B50
	Ding Dong! Kim Gelmiş?	Ding Dong! Who Arrived?	Cemre Arslan	Cemre Arslan	B51
	Yararlı Dostlar: Cincin Yarasa	Helpful Friends: Cincin Bat	Veronica Podesta	Monica Pierazzimitri	B52
	Nasıl Sünnet Oldum?	How Did I Get Circumcised?	Yaşam Yanardağ Çelik	Hülya Günal	B53
	Meritta Kirli Deniz	Meritta Dirty Sea	Ömer Canbir	Bahar Düzen Mete	B54
Can	Sihirli Tüy	Magic Feather	Claude Leon	Claude Leon	B55
	Sıradan Bir Gün	Niets Gebeurd	Mark Janssen	Mark Janssen	B56
	Renkli Öcüler	Colorful Monsters	Can Göknil	Can Göknil	B57

Gökte Bir Tekne	Un Batteau dans le Ciel	Quentin Blake	Quentin Blake	B58
Beni Annem Yavruladı	My Mother Breeded Me	Can Göknil	Can Göknil	B59
Uzun Yeleli Kediçocuk	Long-Haired Cat-Boy Cub	Etgar Keret	Aviel Basil	B60

Data Analysis

In the scope of this study, the data collected from the picture books designed for preschool children has been analyzed utilizing descriptive analysis and content analysis methods, which are among the qualitative data analysis approaches. The unfolding of the potential and content contained in qualitative data depends on its accurate analysis (Miles & Huberman, 2016). In the data analysis process of the research, a combined application of descriptive (deductive) analysis and content (inductive) analysis methods, recognized as types of qualitative data analysis, has been undertaken. Descriptive analysis involves the summarization and interpretation of data within the framework of designated themes (Patton, 2018; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). Accordingly, the verbal and linguistic messages present in the books under examination have been coded, facilitating the establishment of preliminary categories through the systematic arrangement of the coded data. Following the completion of the descriptive data analysis, a subsequent stage involving thematic content analysis has been carried out. Content analysis serves as a technique for collecting and analyzing textual content (Neuman, 2014), and is employed in various fields for document analysis (Merriam, 2018; Neuendorf, 2017). Through this form of analysis, the latent facts embedded within the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021) are brought to light in a consistent and meaningful way (Patton, 2018). The procedure of content analysis involves a sequence of stages, including the examination of research data, the formulation of codes derived from the data, the recognition of themes, the construction of thematic networks, the preservation of thematic integrity, and ultimately the process of interpretation (Miles & Huberman, 2016; Robson, 2017). Within the framework of this research, the data organized through descriptive analysis have been subjected to a comprehensive and comparative examination through content analysis, resulting in the derivation of context-based concepts and conceptual themes.

At this stage, the study's validity and reliability were verified through expert opinions obtained from four academics : two specialists in English Language Education and two in Turkish Language Education, in addition to contributions from three preschool teachers.Through the application of the content analysis method, the following procedure was followed: Informed by the expert opinions of academics specializing in Turkish Language Education, the content analysis of the books in terms of visual content, language and expression, word choice, and meaning was undertaken. Drawing on the guidance of foreign language experts, a comprehensive content analysis targeting translation errors was carried out. Ultimately, relying on preschool teachers' insights, the alignment of books with the principle of appropriateness for children, particularly concerning their cognitive development, was investigated. The educational messages, explicitly or implicitly conveyed through the books, were also organized following expert insights, and identified and interpreted using the document analysis method. The identified educational messages

were analyzed through the descriptive analysis method and subsequently evaluated, taking into consideration their implications for children's education and development.

Findings

This study assesses preschool children's books in terms of their compatibility with the principle of appropriateness for children. In this regard , a comprehensive analysis has been undertaken on 60 different children's books designed for the preschool period, each from different publishing houses, and the findings derived from the examination of these books are presented through visual aids such as graphs, tables, diagrams, or images.

Certain findings obtained from the reviewed books could be characterized as deviating from the principle of appropriateness for children. The most noticeable shortcomings in the books can be categorized as errors related to language and expression, as well as errors associated with images. Given that these two categories collectively constitute the entire universe of meaning in the books, these shortcomings directly impact the intended meaning and educational content to be conveyed through the books. In Diagram 1, these shortcomings are visually presented. The diagram illustrates that linguistic and visual messages together comprise the universe of meaning in the books. At the point where linguistically and visually presented messages intersect, values are conveyed through these messages. This is because the values within the books intended for children are communicated not only through verbal but also through visual messages.

Diagram 1

Elements that negatively affect in preschool children's books

The universe of meaning

Language & expression
- punctuation errors
- spelling mistakes
- the choice of words (not suitable for the level)
- text inconsistency
- ambiguities of expression
- translation errors

Contrary to the principle of appropriateness for children and values

Visual messages
- incongruity between the image and the text

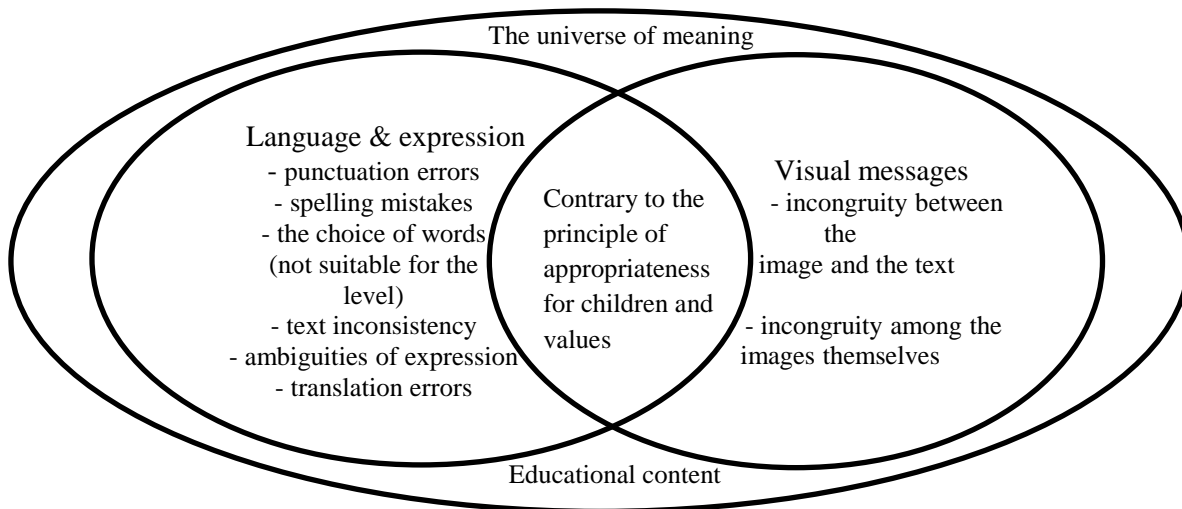- incongruity among the images themselves

Educational content

Table 2 displays the shortcomings identified in relation to the linguistic and visual content of the books, accompanied by their respective frequencies.

Table 2

The shortcomings identified in relation to the linguistic and visual content of the books

Categories	Codes	Book	n	%
Language and expression	Punctuation errors	B1, B2, B3, B5, B6, B7, B8, B9, B10, B11, B12, B14, B17, B19, B20, B21, B24, B28, B29, B30, B32, B35, B36, B37, B38, B39, B43, B44, B45, B46, B47, B49, B51, B52, B55, B56, B57, B58	38	63,33%
	Spelling mistakes	B5, B10, B12, B17, B19, B20, B21, B22, B23, B24, B27, B31, B33, B35, B36, B38, B41, B43, B44, B46, B49, B50, B51, B52, B53, B57, B58	27	45,00%
	The choice of words that are not suitable for the level	B1, B2, B8, B9, B11, B13, B14, B15, B17, B18, B22, B30, B31, B32, B33, B34, B36, B37, B38, B41, B50, B54, B55, B57, B60	25	41,67%
	The use of expressions contrary to the principle of appropriateness for children and values	B1, B2, B4, B8, B9, B10, B14, B15, B17, B18, B22, B33, B34, B35, B36, B37, B38, B39, B41, B54, B55	21	35,00%
	Translation errors	B40, B41, B42, B44, B45, B46, B47, B48	8	13,33%
	Text inconsistency	B7, B19, B20, B21, B23, B40, B49, B51	8	13,33%
	Ambiguities of expression	B3, B6, B32, B33, B52, B53	6	10,00%
Visual messages	The use of images contrary to the principle of appropriateness for children and values	B1, B2, B9, B10, B17, B23, B31, B33, B34, B35, B37, B39, B50, B59	14	23,33%
	Incongruity between the image and the text	B7, B25, B26, B45, B46	5	8,33%
	Incongruity among the images themselves	B7, B16, B32, B57	4	6,67%

In the table, errors linked to language and expression are divided into the following subcategories: Punctuation errors (n=38), spelling mistakes (n=27), the choice of words that are not suitable for the level (n=25), the use of expressions contrary to the principle of appropriateness for children and values (n=21), translation errors (n=8), text inconsistency (n=8) and ambiguities of expression (n=6). The subcategories encapsulating the shortcomings conveyed through visual messages consist of the use of images contrary to the principle of appropriateness for children and values (n=14), incongruity between the image and the text (n=5), and incongruity among the images themselves (n=4). The cases in which the texts of pre-school children's books can be characterized as conflicting with the principle of appropriateness for children concerning language include instances of spelling and punctuation mistakes, non-adherence to textuality criteria, inadequate attention to consistency, selection of words unsuited to children's cognitive development, and translation errors.

The frequencies presented in Table 2 indicate the types of shortcomings identified in the books. The frequency of these shortcomings can vary across different books. For instance, a book might contain multiple punctuation errors or spelling mistakes on each page, or it could have only one instance of such an error throughout the entire book. Moreover, the examined books might feature a single type of error, or they could encompass multiple distinct errors. This could mean that a book contains solely a spelling mistake or, alternatively, a combination of a spelling mistake, a translation error, and an inconsistency. As a result, it's important to note that the percentile values in the table do not provide a complete representation of the overall percentile distribution. Graph 1 illustrates the distribution of cases that do not align with the principle of appropriateness for children in the examined books.

Graph 1

The distribution of cases that do not align with the principle of appropriateness for children in the books
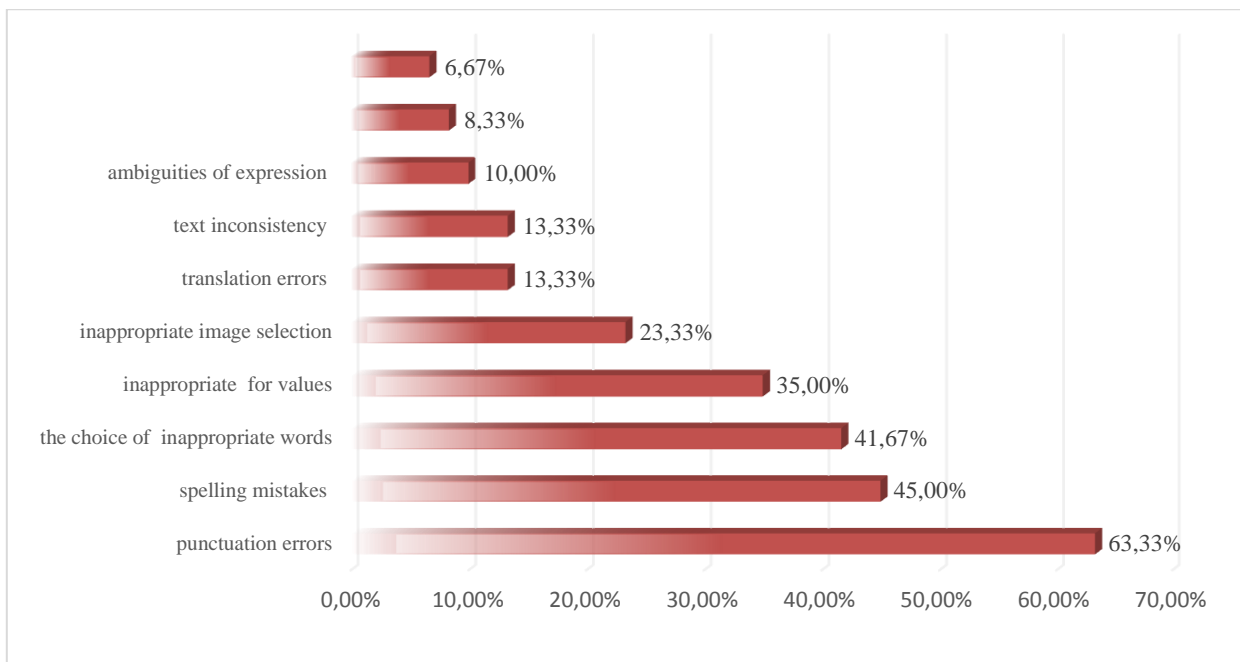
As can be seen from the graph, punctuation errors were found in 63.33% of the books. Punctuation errors include mistakes such as the unnecessary use of some punctuation marks (especially commas and semicolons), the omission of some punctuation marks (for example, opening but not closing quotation marks), the incorrect use of capital letters, etc. Apart from punctuation errors, the most common oversights are related to spelling mistakes (45,00%) and the choice of words inappropriate for children's developmental stages (41,67%). The use of expressions contrary to the principle of appropriateness for children and values was found in 35,00% of the books. The use of images contrary to the principle of appropriateness for children and values was found in 23,33%. The least identified shortcomings are translation errors (13,33%), text inconsistency (13,33%), ambiguities of expression (10,00%), incongruity between the image and the text (8,33%), and incongruity among the images themselves (6,67%).

Among the spelling mistakes, the most common are the misspellings of the Turkish circumflex accent (eg., hal-hâl) or confusing the spelling of the function words such as "de" [also] and "ki" as well as the affixes. Certain

spelling mistakes manifest as typographical errors, whereas others arise due to an insufficient understanding of Turkish grammar rules. Image 1 is presented to illustrate this situation. Spelling mistakes in the image are seen as a type of error that can cause ambiguity of expression while reading the text.

Image 1

An illustration depicting the spelling mistakes (B19)

Regarding word choice, the identified issues that deviate from the principle of appropriateness for children involve the use of words unsuitable for their cognitive development level or the selection of words that could potentially set unfavorable examples for children. There are also instances where the conceptual equivalents of words are supported by visuals (see Image 2). Among the words and expressions that are not suitable for children's level of understanding are terms that may be difficult for children to grasp at this stage (such as 'moon probe,' 'avast,' 'billage,' 'vulva,' 'ovule,' 'placenta'), as well as words that are not recommended for use due to their negative semantic-conceptual content (for example, 'pistol,' 'machete,' 'accursed castle,' 'delicious eye soup,' 'skull,' 'jar full of eyes,' 'wicked witch,' 'killer whale') found in both texts and images.

Image 2

An illustration depicting the inappropriate use of words and images (B34)

Textuality criteria hold significance for messages communicated verbally. An illustrative case of verbal errors that undermine text coherence involves the discontinuity of characters or images. In one of the examined books, as shown in Image 3, a main character is introduced as "Efe" in the first sentence and later as "Ege" in the third sentence on the same page. This inconsistency disrupts the continuity of the subject and character in the book. When it comes to the educational messages conveyed by the book, on the other hand, it has been identified that the book places emphasis on privacy education through clear descriptions and analogies catered to the understanding of children.

Image 3

A typo negatively affecting subject-character continuity and text consistency (B49)

An example of how coherence, as one of the textuality criteria, is negatively affected is evident in cases where consistency in verb tenses is overlooked. Image 4 illustrates an instance of verb tenses' inconsistency. The first sentence is in the simple present tense, while the second uses the simple past tense. In the subsequent sentence, the past continuous tense is utilized, followed using the future-in-the-past tense in the succeeding sentence. The final sentence reverts to the simple past tense. Additionally, a misspelling (direk) – which, in Turkish, means "column", but the intended meaning here is "directly" – is evident in the textual content of the same image. However, the image content clearly disregards the principle of appropriateness for children by including elements of fear.

Image 4

An example showcasing tense inconsistency, misspellings, and inappropriate visual content (B23)

Certain books contain negative messages and words carrying unfavorable semantic content, potentially conflicting with the principles of value-oriented education. To illustrate this, several examples from the examined books could be provided: Words with negative connotations such as "fool", "harpoon", "trickster", "smug" (from B11), "filthy thief" (from B18), "bandit", "outlaw" (from B17); expressions with messages diverging from values, such as "card game" (from B60), "drinking delicious eye soup" (from B34), "stealing" (from B8); and sentences that may cause conceptual confusion for children, such as "one day I will get married too, I'll find a woman with a swollen belly for myself, so I can have my own offspring" (from B59). This situation varies among books from different publishers and authors. To exemplify, in another book, the word "stealing" is substituted with the verb "disappear". Certain explicit and implicit messages that run counter to social and ethical values can be identified as part of the verbal and visual errors related to the universe of meaning. With respect to value-oriented education, it has been found that certain books contain unfavorable components for children. Moreover, these books incorporate semantic and conceptual information that exceeds children's cognitive capabilities and could set negative examples for them. Additionally, the books include both explicit and implicit messages that may lead to conceptual confusion on the part of children.

Image 5 and Image 6 stand as examples of situations where negative semantic-conceptual content is evident, not only in the choice of words but also in the selection of concepts depicted through images. The semantic content presented in these images, sourced from different books, stands in direct opposition to the ethos of privacy education for children. More specifically, Image 5 depicts a situation in which an adult serves as a role model for a child and meets his personal needs (i.e., toilet needs) in a public space, subsequently encouraging the child to follow suit. Similarly, Image 6 presents the act of a child openly urinating in a crowded public space as an ordinary occurrence. It is crucial to note that such images, both in terms of adults serving as role models for children and the importance attributed to societal norms, ethical values, and privacy education, epitomize messages that convey negative semantic content.

Image 5

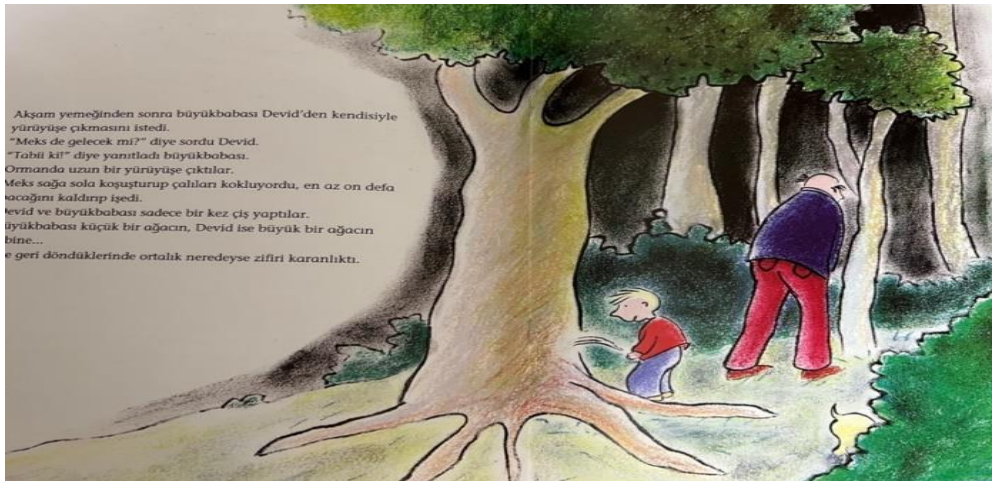*An illustration of negative visual content portraying adults as role models (B9)*

Image 6

An illustrative case of visual content odds with social rules and privacy education (B39)

Another illustrative example of visual messages deviating from accepted societal values and potentially leading to ambiguity in the context of sexual identity development is showcased in Image 7. It is striking that a male character in the book who is dressed in women's clothes is described as "scruffy" and depicted as poorly groomed and sloppy. Although the importance of cooperation as an educational message is emphasized to a great extent in the book, the verbal and visual presentation of the character's sloppiness, the depiction of the character in a woman's dress, and the fact that at the end of the book he undresses and stays on the street with his underwear are negative situations that can be seen as objectionable in terms of both gender identity education and privacy education.

Image 7

An example of visual content conflicting with social and ethical values (B1)

The most striking examples of the universe of meaning emerge in books for children's sexual education . However, certain books contain excessively detailed terms as well as visual and linguistic content that exceeds the comprehension level of children to a considerable extent. These materials reach a level of complexity similar to

topics covered in secondary school biology curricula, which children typically encounter at a later stage in their education.

Another objectionable element conveyed through both linguistic and visual content concerns expressions of violence. The prevalence of elements containing violence has been identified in certain books, occurring in some cases exclusively within visual depictions while in others spanning both visual and linguistic levels. Image 8 illustrates elements of violence that may be viewed as contradictory to the principle of appropriateness for children. While the textual content of this specific book does not explicitly contain violent language, it is worth noting that there is a recurrent display of inappropriate behaviors and elements of violence conveyed through images.

Image 8

The use of elements depicting violence, inappropriate for children, in visual content (B39)

The shortcomings of visual messages are not limited to the presentation of inappropriate content. At the core level, the issues associated with the images in books can be characterized by instances where visual elements do not overlap with one another or where discrepancies arise between the textual and visual contents. Image 9 serves as an illustration of the disparity between text and image. While the text specifies a "blue-colored tractor" (mavi renkli traktör), the image depicts a red tractor.
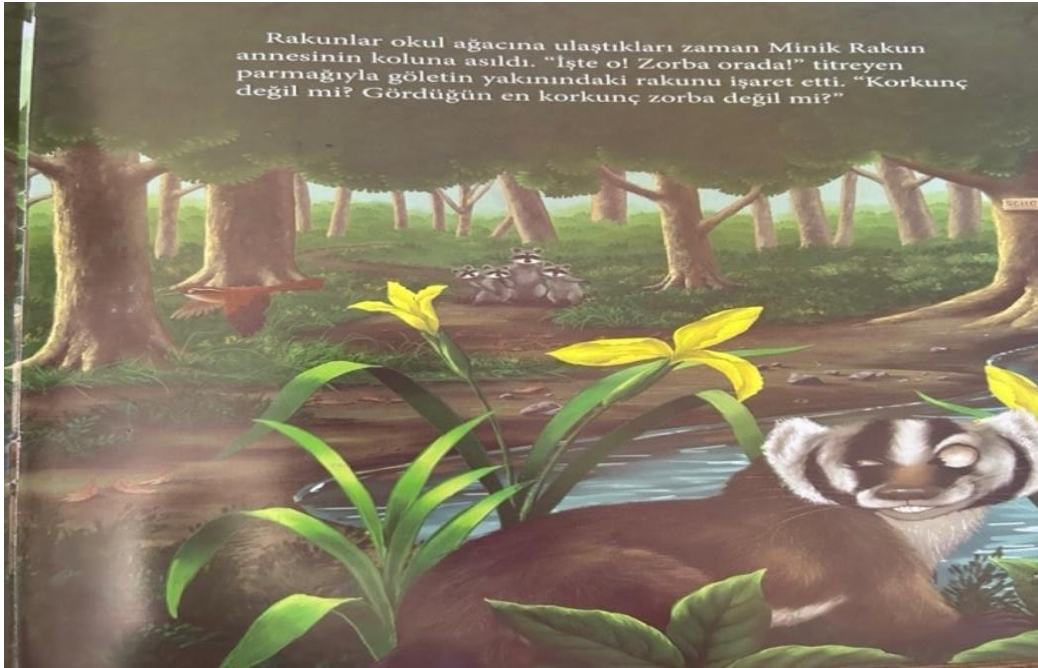
Image 9

An illustration of text-image mismatch (B26)
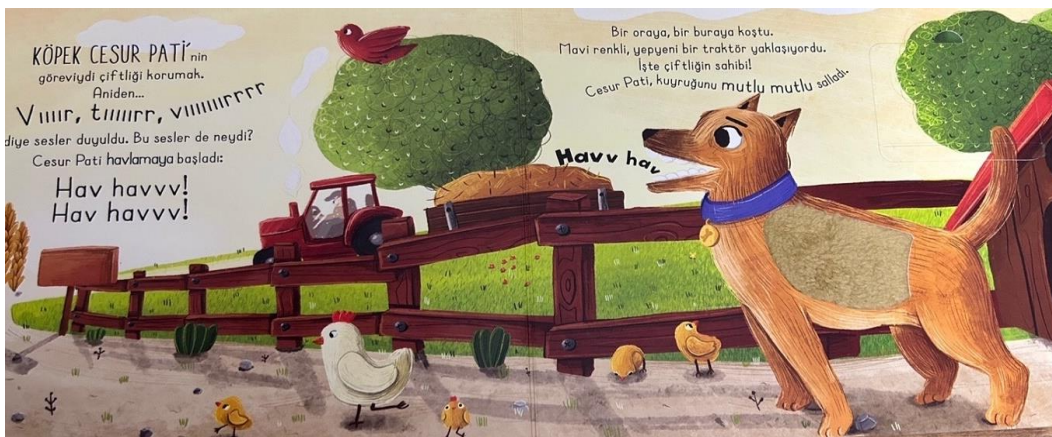
On the other hand, it is evident that some of the inconsistencies between images and content result from translation errors. An illustration of such an instance can be found in a paragraph from the book Chester Raccoon and The Big Bad Bully. In the book's original language, it reads, "When the racoons reached the school tree, Chester tugged on his mother's arm. 'That's him! That's the bully.' He pointed a trembling finger at a badger standing by the pond. 'Isn't he awful? Isn't he the most scary-looking bully you've ever seen?' ". However, a discrepancy arises as the English version explicitly uses the word "badger" and presents a badger in the image, but the Turkish translation renders the word "badger" as "rakun". This image-text inconsistency caused by the translation error is clearly seen in Image 10.

Image 10

*An illustration of image-text mismatch due to translation error (B46)*

Similarly, Image 11 demonstrates a discrepancy between the image and content information, attributable to a comparable translation error found in another book by the same author and the same publishing house. The translation of the word "chester" in the sentence "Chester's black mask was brushed to a shine." into Turkish as "badger" (porsuk) disrupts the congruity between the image and content, resulting in non-overlapping elements. A close examination of the textual context shows that the expression "But his brother's was stuck full of cones from a pine" in the subsequent part of the sentence refers to the racoon, not the badger. This issue not only undermines the text's coherence but also introduces a semantic contradiction.

Image 11

Another illustration of image-text mismatch due to translation error (B45)
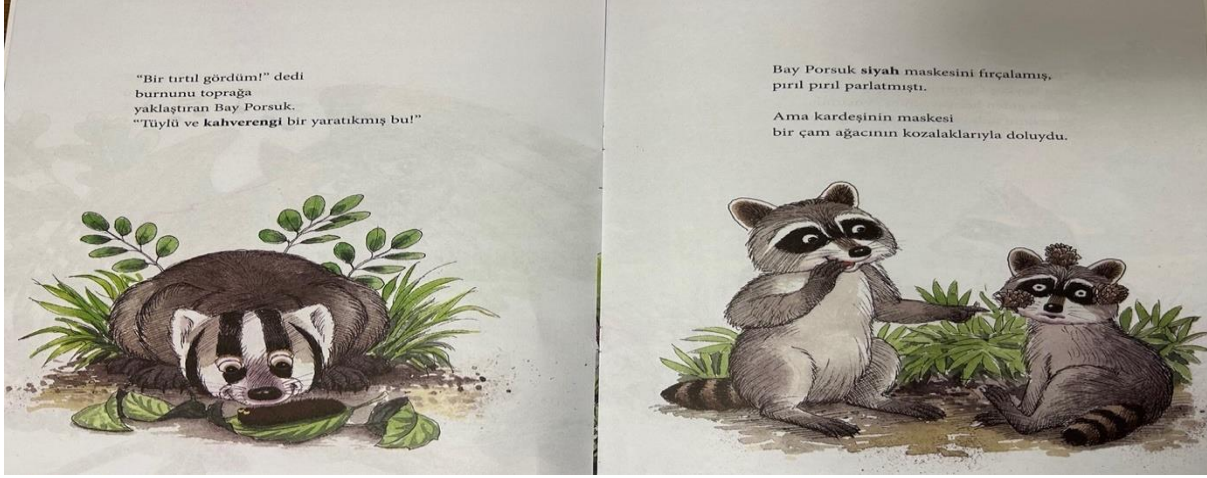
It should be acknowledged that all the books examined thus far hold considerable significance in terms of the positive educational messages they convey. However, some of those books demonstrate a tendency to overlook the principle of appropriateness for children, regarding the universe of meaning established by both linguistic and visual content.

Discussion, Conclusion & Suggestions

In this study, the universe of meaning conveyed through visual and linguistic messages in picture books intended for preschool children is evaluated with respect to the principle of appropriateness for children. A prevalent pattern identified in most of the examined books is related to linguistic messages, characterized by recurrent spelling and punctuation errors. This finding is completely different from the results of previous studies (Darga et al., 2021; Gönen et al., 2012; Gönen & Aydos, 2013; Gönen et al., 2014; Gönen et al., 2016), which found that in children's books, spelling rules are followed, and punctuation marks are used appropriately and correctly. However, this circumstance can be elucidated by the differences among the books under analysis. While certain instances of spelling and punctuation errors might be seen as minor typographical errors, others manifest as considerably more serious grammatical errors. Certainly, the presence of errors leading to the introduction of ambiguity within text can exert deleterious impacts on the process of language development in children. These errors, frequently construed as matters pertaining to stylistic nuances, exert a substantial influence on the facets of language and expression.

Whereas combining words that should be written separately (e.g., "hoşça kal" [goodbye]) might not alter the meaning, confusing the use of affixes or conjunctions potentially leads to ambiguity of expression and disrupts textual coherence. As also highlighted by Deniz and Gönen (2020), it is recommended that picture story books use language that is both clear and easily comprehensible, while also ensuring adherence to spelling and punctuation rules. However, it is seen that the necessary care was not taken during the writing process of the books. Yıldız (2016) affirms that children's books should maintain a level of error-free quality and should rigorously follow the rules of

grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Therefore, it is essential that books undergo a thorough editing process prior to being published.

Findings that do not comply with the principle of appropriateness for children in word selection are the choice of words inappropriate for children's cognitive development level, or the choice of words that may set a bad example for children (such as words used in offensive and insulting language or slang). In this context, it is imperative to consider vocabulary and expressions that surpass the cognitive capabilities of individuals at the developmental stage characteristic of children. This includes not only scientific or technical terminology but also vocabulary laden with negative semantic and conceptual connotations, which may be deemed unsuitable in the context of fostering optimal language development in children. As emphasized in several studies (Barnes et al., 2016; Tüfekçi-Can, 2014), children's books should feature texts that contain diverse and refined vocabulary to foster language development.

Books that address matters related to sexual education stand out as notable examples of using language that surpasses the cognitive capacity of children, making it challenging for them to grasp the concepts. These books evidently feature not only terms (such as vulva, ovule, placenta) that are notably beyond the comprehension level of children, but also complex and exclusively detailed visual and linguistic expressions. For example, one of the books suggests using the term penis instead of "pipi" (weenie). However, the word pipi is primarily defined as "the phallus in the language of children" in the up-to-date dictionary of the Turkish Linguistic Society (TLS, 2023), According to Öztürk and Feyman Gök (2021), children's picture books tend to emphasize male-female bodies the most among all elements of sexual education, while the concept of body value receives the least attention. Hence, they suggest placing a heightened focus on the concept of body value and endorse the adoption of anatomical terms to refer to genitalia. Nevertheless, in accordance with the viewpoints advanced by experts, notably those within the domain of early childhood education, there appears to be a prevailing tendency within children's literature to incorporate lexicon that aligns with the commonplace linguistic repertoire of children, rather than resorting to the inclusion of anatomical terminology. This opinion holds even more significance considering research indicating that complex sentences beyond children's level of comprehension and overly simple and basic sentences falling below their cognitive capacity can both adversely affect children's engagement with books (Karatay, 2011).

Another illustrative case, with potential negative influence on children in terms of word choice, involves the recurring use of pirate characters in most of the books. The word "pirate" (korsan) is defined as "a sea bandit, sea thief attacking ships" in the up-to-date dictionary of the TLS (2023). Concepts such as theft and banditry in this definition may be subject to criticism, as they inherently carry negative semantic associations for children. Similarly, it is striking that in some of the books, behaviors that can be considered negative according to value-oriented education are expressed with words reflecting negative content. For instance, the book titled Who Stole the Moon? (Ay'ı Kim Çaldı?) frequently features the verb "stealing" ("çalmak") within the text, where the unauthorized act of taking items belonging to others is presented in a manner that might inadvertently normalize this behavior.

Nonetheless, it should be noted that this case varies across other books centered on the same topic but published by different publishing houses and written by different authors. More specifically, another book narrates an identical case by using the expression "disappearing" instead of the word "stealing". Presenting scientific and accurate

information as part of books' educational content makes them valuable and particularly favored. However, it is crucial to bear in mind that the author's choice of words plays a pivotal role in the development of children's knowledge pertaining to language. While the way different authors express the same subject is a reflection of their individual styles, this divergence particularly concerns children's education and development, and influences the quality of books and the universe of meaning conveyed within them. It is necessary to avoid a form of expression that is not suitable for children and the use of words that are difficult for them to understand (Oğuzkan, 2013). A thorough consideration of children's universe of meaning is the prerequisite for selecting words that align with the principle of appropriateness for children. Deniz and Gönen (2020) emphasize the paramount importance of employing an extensive lexicon within the realm of children's literature, with a particular emphasis on the incorporation of lexemes that facilitate the cultivation of intricate semantic nuances and the evocation of vivid imagery. Additionally, their recommendations encompass the introduction of novel vocabulary replete with unfamiliar meanings, as well as the utilization of familiar words in divergent semantic contexts.

In the book The Smartest Giant in Town ("İyi Yürekli Dev Memo"), the messages conveyed through word choices stand out as contentious, revealing certain shortcomings. While the book indeed underscores the significance of collaboration within its educational messages, it simultaneously harbors objectionable components pertaining to principles such as self-care, self-discipline, and privacy. These contentious elements involve describing the main character as "scruffy" ("pasaklı"), attiring him in women's garments although he is a man, and depicting negative content such as walking on the street in underwear at the end. Başaran et al. (2021) also find this book unsuitable for children due to its form and content features, largely owing to the presence of words with inappropriate content. The research findings of Başaran et al. (2021) align with the outcomes highlighted in this study, particularly concerning the identification of negative language expressions, words, and idioms that are not suitable for the intended age group yet are present in the analyzed books. While not entirely aligned with the database of the present study, the occurrence of similar findings, particularly with respect to the books examined, across different studies is noteworthy. Concerning the semantic messages conveyed through both images and texts, instances that potentially contradict gender roles, moral and societal values have been identified. Although this outcome diverges from the findings reported in studies by Gündüz Şentürk (2015), Kaynak and Aktaş (2017), and Yener (2020), such disparity can be attributed to the variations in authors, illustrators, and content featured in the analyzed books. However, the findings related to gender roles are particularly significant, especially when considering the treatment of the same subject matter in recent preschool children's books published abroad and the findings obtained from studies (Sunderland & McGlashan, 2012 and Lester, 2014; Sandercock, 2023; Tribunella, 2023).

In the study conducted by Başaran et al. (2021), an examination of a specific book in terms of the category of sexual elements exposed the inclusion of illustrations and textual representations featuring same-sex characters kissing each other on the lips. Sunderland and McGlashan (2012) posit that the representation of ideas related to homosexuality can provoke negative reactions when juxtaposed with social values that perpetuate the stereotypes of the majority. Accordingly, matters that cannot be categorically written and verbally described might be effectively implied through visual means, allowing for subtler communication. As elucidated by Deniz and Gözütok (2017), it is noteworthy that books encompass a dual realm comprising linguistic expressions and visual representations, both

of which hold the potential to either serve as foundational elements in the construction of gender stereotypes or offer explicit guidance and instruction pertaining to this particular subject matter. However, as Yıldız (2016) emphasizes, situations that will negatively affect the development of children's personalities should not be included in the books. Considering the outcomes derived from these studies, it becomes evident that the implicit messages in the books may not be as innocent as they seem; indeed, these implicit messages might be concealed behind explicit educational content. The topics in the books should provide children with universal values and contribute to the development of ethical values (Çatalcalı-Soyer, 2009). Therefore, careful consideration should be devoted to the meaning encapsulated within the content and communicated through linguistic and visual messages in children's books, encompassing both explicit and implicit connotations.

The criteria of textuality are important in linguistic messages. Linguistic errors involve elements that hinder consistency, such as interruptions in character or image flow within the text, or the utilization of varied grammatical tenses within the narration. The continuity of the narrative time is also important, as is the continuity of the subject and character. According to the findings of Başaran et al. (2021), children's picture books contain negative elements concerning form, content, theme, language and expression, hero-character, and time. The results obtained in this study align with the findings of Başaran et al. (2021). Translation errors further contribute to the lack of text consistency. This result also shows the necessity of emphasizing the cultural differences included in translated children's books, as proposed in the study by Güzelyurt (2020). Kansu Yetkiner (2010) states that in cases of conflict with target culture norms concerning content and quality in translated texts, problematic transfers should be removed, changes should be made in the choice of words, the tone of the discourse should be softened, the use of objectionable language should be removed, and the content that may be dangerous for children should be changed. Cognitive and linguistic developmental issues and the ability of children to understand foreign elements are central to the translation of children's literature; this is always a balancing act between adapting concepts in the target language to the level of understanding of the children and the level at which the children can understand. What is appropriate is to preserve the differences with the potential of the translated foreign text to enrich the target culture (O'Sullivan, 2013; 2019; 2021).

On the other hand, the outcomes of this study indicate that un-translating segments of the source text into the target language also constitute translation errors since, in this case, the objectionable content was overlooked by the translator rather than being intentionally removed. 80.00% of the books examined in the study are translated. Given that these literary works have received prestigious accolades and are frequently consumed by a young readership, it becomes imperative to underscore the paramount significance of their meticulous translation into the target language. This meticulous translation process is essential not only for ensuring linguistic fidelity but also for effectively transmitting the inherent educational quality and substance encapsulated within these acclaimed books. Moreover, such translation errors are considered unexpected and unusual in the most widely read and award-winning books.

Errors related to visual content encompass various unfavorable instances, including the selection of images incongruent with the principle of appropriateness for children, discrepancies between images and text, and inconsistencies among the images themselves. Inappropriate selection of images may negatively affect the cognitive

development of children, potentially changing their value judgments and behavior patterns. The images must be in parallel with the child's developmental level because visual text can maintain its relationship with the child as long as it provides ease of perception (Çer, 2016). It has been established that there are some images in the books that do not meet the principle of appropriateness for children. This result overlaps with the results of the study conducted by Gönen et al. (2014). Başaran et al. (2021) also note that among the prevalent negative features concerning form within the scrutinized books in their research, images constitute a significant factor. The convergence of similar outcomes in this study reinforces the need for increased attention to visual content. As one of the most important elements in children's books that appeal to the pre-school period, images allow the subject and plotline of the books to come to life in the minds of children. Verhallen and Bus (2011) have revealed that images in the books are effective in helping children understand the meaning of the text. Greenhoot et al. (2014) also emphasize the correlation between images and the processes of understanding and remembering. Gönen et al. (2016) further elaborate that children's initial interaction with books primarily occurs through images, followed by the integration of picture-text interplay.

The congruity between text and images is one of the most important features that picture story books should have (Martinez & Harmon, 2012; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2019; Sipe, 2008). The fact that the images do not overlap with the text can, to some extent, affect the word and concept development of children who perceive and interpret the text through images. Gönen et al. (2012) arrive at the conclusion that a substantial majority of the analyzed books pay attention to the image/text relationship. Başaran et al. (2021) emphasize the significance of ensuring coherence between the visual and textual content in children's picture books. The identification of disparities between images and texts in certain books aligns with the findings of previous studies exploring image-text congruence (Darga et al., 2021; Gönen & Aydos, 2013; Ertok Atmaca, 2006; İşcan & Cımbız, 2018), underscoring the importance of attending to image-text congruence. In alignment with the empirical observations delineated by Başaran et al. (2021), the present investigation corroborates that, within the domain of structural attributes, the textual-visual relationship emerges as one of the less frequently occurring adverse characteristics discerned throughout the comprehensive analysis of the examined literary works. It has been revealed that the image-text inconsistencies, which are few in the books, are mostly caused by translation errors. However, even though two of the scrutinized books with image-text incongruence are not translated books, it is evident that the content information and the image do not match. This circumstance emphasizes the need to thoroughly assess the texts in comparison with their visual content.

The evaluation of the preschool children's books examined within the scope of this study aligns with expert opinions. Books prepared for the pre-school period are important in terms of contributing to the psycho-social, cognitive, and linguistic development of children, as well as forming the basis for reading habits. As is the case with research conducted in this field, the current study aims to contribute to the scholarly debate. Nevertheless, it is advisable to consider broadening the scope of the database in future research to achieve a higher degree of generalizability. Additionally, a holistic and multidimensional approach is essential when dealing with books. Similar studies can be carried out for books addressed to different age groups. Moreover, the findings from this study could lay the groundwork for conducting more comprehensive and detailed research involving children as participants and within the context of preschool institutions.

Ethic

As the data collection and analysis in this study were carried out through the document analysis method using preschool children's books, the requirement for ethics committee approval is not applicable. Ethical regulations have been observed in the presentation of data and references in the study, and proper acknowledgement of the cited works has been provided.

Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this research.

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