



Okul Öncesi Çocuklarına Yönelik Türk ve Amerikan Resimli Öykü Kitaplarının Kalite Karşılaştırması¹

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ÖZET

Bu çalışmada, Türk ve Amerikan resimli hikâye kitapları bazı kalite özelliklerine göre karşılaştırılmıştır. Yazarlar, Erzincan, Türkiye ve Teksas ABD'deki on erken çocukluk eğitim merkezinden toplanan toplam elli resimli hikâye kitabını analiz etmiştir. Türk ve Amerikan resimli hikâye kitaplarının kalite özellikleri, bir ölçek ve yazarların ölçek maddelerine ilişkin kişisel hesaplarıyla analiz edilmiştir. İki ülkedeki resimli hikâye kitaplarındaki kalite özelliklerinin, ülkelerin sosyoekonomik yapısı ile bağlantılı olduğu ve çocukların resimli kitaplarının kalitesini okuldaki ve evdeki eğitim ve okuma uygulamaları doğrultusunda artırma önerileri getirildiği ortaya konmuştur.

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The Quality Comparison of Turkish and American Picture Storybooks for Young Children⁴

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ABSTRACT

In this study, the Turkish and American picture storybooks were compared according to some quality aspects. A total of fifty picture storybooks collected from ten early childhood education centers in Erzincan, Turkey, and Texas, U.S. were analyzed by the authors. The quality features of Turkish and American picture storybooks were analyzed through a scale and personal accounts of the authors regarding the scale items. It is revealed that the quality features in picture story books across two countries were interconnected with the socioeconomic structure of the countries and the suggestions were provided to raise the quality of children's picture books in line with the educational and reading practices at school and home.

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Introduction

Books are a natural part of the educational process throughout one's life. Love for books is rooted in the very early years of life (Morrison, 2015). The early joyful encounters and experiences with quality picture books set the basis to improve the sense of literacy in the later life. Hence it is important to choose the books to improve the latter reading habits for young children (Gönen, 1993; Jalongo, 2004). The preschool teachers frequently use picture books during in-class activities, and young children select the picture books at the book corners/centers in their classrooms during the free times. Beginning from infancy, the parents have the chance to nourish their interactions with their babies through the picture books (Bus & van Ijzendoorn, 1988; Sénéchal, Cornell, & Broda, 1995). The teachers and parents with the well-established reading habits stand as the role models for young children. Through the interactive reading processes between the adults and children enriched with the open-ended questions and educational materials, youngsters' curiosity and creativity, developmental areas and early literacy skills could be supported (Ergül, Akoğlu, Sarıca, Tufan, & Karaman, 2015).

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The fine motor skills (Jalongo, 2004), language skills (Sénéchal et al., 1995), pre-literacy skills (Bus & van Ijzendoorn, 1988; Mol & Bus, 2011), social skills (Bus & van Ijzendoorn, 1988), and math skills (Elia, van den Heuvel-Panhuizen, & Georgiou, 2010; Hong, 1996) in young children could be supported with the picture book related activities. Through picture books, the way of becoming literate adults is paved. The young children passing the time with the picture books learn to create time for books and develop a passion for the books in the future (Jalongo, 2004). The young children are acknowledged about the social roles and interactions through picture books. They recognize the children and families that are different from their own and enrich their social, personal, intellectual, and cultural perspectives (Morrow, 1983). Creating connections between the words and pictures is an integral part of picture book reading. The pictures help the children understand the text. Young children are better at understanding the complex situations through pictures rather relying on the long and detailed texts like adults (Fang, 1996). Hence the child's imagination and creativity are supported through pictures.

The quality of picture books affects the reading process of parents and teachers and in turn children's learning process (Sénéchal et al., 1995). There are some studies in the literature regarding choosing of the right books for young children depending on various quality criteria (Anderson, Anderson, Shapiro, & Lynch, 2001; Demircan, 2006; Dwyer & Neuman, 2008; Ersoy, Avcı, & Turla, 2007; Jalongo, 2004; Körükçü, 2012; Uluğ & Bayraktar, 2014; Veziroğlu & Gönen, 2012). It has been indicated that the Turkish picture books used in preschool education had some shortcomings in their interior (theme, topic, characters, language and style) and exterior (used material, size, weight, cover, binding, font size, layout and illustration) quality (Gönen, 1993). The literature review revealed that although the publications on the quality characteristics of picture books provide a solid foundation in choosing the right books for young children; there is no study conducted on the quality comparison of picture books used in the preschools in different countries. The most comprehensive research would be the comparison of picturing techniques and pictorial characteristics of picture books from 22 countries conducted by ÜnlüÇetin and Cir (2016). Hence, the purpose of this study was to examine the quality of picture books used in Turkish and American preschools on the same criteria, which would help to see the quality differences in two groups of picture books. Hence the selection of picture books from early childhood education centers in Turkey and the United States could help in forming ideas about the quality of picture books. In the quality assessment of picture books, some general criteria are used in the previous studies, appearing as interior and exterior features. The exterior features of picture books involved binding, cover, paper, page layout; whereas, the wording and literary style are involved in the interior features (Oğuzkan, 2006; Sever, 2010). In this study, the picture books were analyzed in the line of those criteria and also the reviewers' personal accounts helped in the detailing of analysis.

Method

Research design

In this study, the descriptive and qualitative analysis was used to analyze the picture books. A scale evaluating the quality features of the books and authors' accounts on those features was integrated into the analysis. The research design is a mixed method which involves the use of both qualitative and quantitative techniques (Burke & Christensen, 2012). One of the advantages of mixed method research is expanding the scope of research and providing more diverse and rich perspectives on the research problem (Creswell, 2009), which was detailed in the discussion. In this study, the evaluation of picture books was carried out with a Likert type scale, and the researchers' accounts on these items were reflected simultaneously.

Participants

The participants of this research were a total of fifty picture books conveniently selected from the five early childhood education centers in Erzincan and Denton in the fall semester of 2014. The sampling procedure was convenient because the books were collected from the schools that accepted to borrow their books to the researchers. The second author of the research collected the twenty-five books from five early childhood education centers in Denton, Texas where she studied during her doctoral education. The third author collected the twenty-five books from five early childhood education centers in Erzincan where she worked as a research assistant. The criteria for selecting the books were that the book should represent the Turkish and American child literature and should be a piece that is similar to the other books on the shelves. Considering this selection criterion, the sampling method could be called as typical sampling (Teddlie & Yu, 2007) that is to say; the selected books were representative of the Turkish and American child literature and similar to the other books in the book corners in the classrooms.

Instrument

In analyzing the books, an instrument was developed by the researchers depending on the previous literature (Al Otaiba, 2004; Anderson et al., 2001; Demircan, 2006; Dwyer & Neuman 2008; Ersoy et al., 2007; Jalongo, 2004; Ministry of National Education, 2013; Sever, 2010; Veziroğlu & Gönen, 2012). The authors developed the instrument analyzing the interior and exterior features of books and reviewed by two professors specialized in preschool education, and one professor specialized in children's literature. Considering the reviews of the experts, the necessary changes were made and the instrument was shaped. Using the instrument, each book was independently reviewed by the three authors of this research; hence three independent review forms were collected for each book. The two researchers collected the books in Denton and Erzincan, scanned the whole books and write down the texts in the books and sent the files to each other and to the first author via email.

The books in the sample were analyzed according to the exterior (dimension, paper, cover, binding, illustrations, page layout, and identity information) and interior characteristics (wording and literary style, subject, planning, and theme). The items were coded on a three-point Likert type scale (1=not appropriate, 2=somewhat appropriate, and 3=appropriate). The researchers also added their comments about each characteristic. Below are the numbers of characteristics analyzed with sample items.

Dimension (2 items). “When the teacher reads the book, the pictures and text should be seen by children.”

Paper (3 items). “The texture of the paper should allow the child to turn the page over.”

Cover (4 items). “The cover should be compatible with the subject.”

Binding (2 items). “The binding should protect the inner pages.”

Pictures (7 items). “The illustrations should be complementary to the text.”

Page layout (3 items). “The page layout should be comfy and appealing.”

Identity information (8 items). “The resume of the author(s) should be provided.”

Wording and literary style (13 items). “The wording should be simple and clear.”

Subject (8 items). “The subject should be appropriate for the child’s conceptual development of his age.”

Planning (2 items). “The events should be organized consistently.”

Theme (4 items). “The theme should provide universal values.”

Data analysis

The three researchers independently analyzed the whole books. Each picture book was read by each researcher and independently analyzed. A composite score for each book on each item was calculated by summing up the three scores and dividing it by three. The scores for each book again was calculated for the subscales, interior and exterior features and total score. The results are presented in Table 1.

Results

Table 1. The Mean Quality Scores of Turkish and American Picture Books

Subscales	Turkish sample			American sample			Subscales	Turkish sample			American sample		
Exterior	<i>n</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SS</i>	<i>n</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SS</i>	Interior	<i>n</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SS</i>	<i>n</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SS</i>
Dimension	25	8.34	.82	25	7.36	1.06	Wording	25	8.15	.81	25	8.73	.57
Paper	25	7.12	1.02	25	8.64	.62	Subject	25	8.02	1.04	25	8.12	.23
Cover	25	7.39	.9	25	7.84	.59	Plan	25	8.72	.83	25	8.88	1.12
Binding	25	4.16	.6	25	8.66	.71	Theme	25	7.02	1.88	25	7.9	.6
Pictures	25	8.75	.61	25	8.84	.4	Total (interior)	25	7.98	.84	25	8.43	1.59
Page layout	25	7.98	.91	25	5.96	1.15							
Identity info	25	5.97	.68	25	7.25	.67							
Total (exterior)	25	7.2	.42	25	7.83	.42							
Total (ext+int)	25	7.12	.5	25	7.64	.36							

In Table 1, it is seen that the total quality score is higher for the American books (7.64), compared to the Turkish books (7.12). The American books had higher scores on the total interior (8.43) and exterior scores (7.83) than the Turkish total interior (7.98) and exterior scores (7.20). Regarding the dimension and page layout of exterior qualities, the Turkish books had higher scores (respectively; 8.34 and 7.98) than the American books (7.36 and 5.96). Regarding the interior qualities, it is seen that the American books had higher scores than the Turkish books on each dimension.

Discussion

The researchers had a chance to closely examine the Turkish books in their childhood and American picture books during their educational experiences abroad. In initiating this research, the researchers had some pre-constructed ideas about the quality of American and Turkish picture books. They claimed that the American books had higher quality, especially in binding and paper quality and the subject and pictures were more creative than the Turkish books. The same reasons directing the researchers to conduct this research could also cause bias in analyzing the books. Also, the researchers were familiar with the Turkish culture and literary style which could be regarded as another bias that could limit the objectivity of the researchers.

When all the qualities are examined, the American books had higher scores than the Turkish books on each quality except dimension and page layout. It is much more possible for the young child to carry the Turkish books compared to the bigger American books. The majority of American books had hardcover and was relatively bigger than the paper covered Turkish books which could pose a disadvantage for the child's use. In the paper quality, it is seen that the majority of the Turkish books were pressed on thin, shiny and slippery papers; contrary to the quality criteria that the paper quality should allow the child to turn over the pages by himself and be matte. The shiny papers could restrain some children's sight during the large group readings, and the slippery quality of papers could give a hard time to the child in turning the pages by himself. Especially for younger children, the matte and thick pages could support the page turning process for little fingers.

It is seen that the majority of Turkish books were bound with staples and the cover was overly thin that is not appropriate to protect the inner pages resulting in lower average scores for the Turkish sample on the cover. The lower quality of binding and page were also detected in Turkish picture books (Gönen, 1993). Here, it must be noted that the purchasing power of the Turkish families are lower, thus the publishers choose the lower cost of binding and page quality. In the pictures dimension, both the American and Turkish books had almost scored full with a slight difference in favor of the American sample. It is explained by the authors that the pictures in the American sample are more artistic, creative and detailed that caused them scored slightly higher than the Turkish pictures.

In the page layout, the Turkish picture books had higher scores which are explained by the neat structure of the placement of texts and page numbers. The American books have authentic styles in the text placement and fonts which could heighten the child's attention to

the text (Fang, 1996). It was found in the research that page numbers were not used in any of the American picture books. The American books had higher scores in the identity information due to the detailed information about the publisher, author, and illustrator. Similarly, Körükçü (2012) pointed out the inadequacy of the exterior features in Turkish picture books for young children. Gönen (1993) also explained the deficiencies in the content, picturing, and other external features of the Turkish picture books and also the preschool teachers' incompetency in child literature.

When the interior qualities are examined, it is seen that the refined humorous style and length of sentences and paragraphs appropriate for young children caused the American books to get higher scores on wording than the Turkish books. In Turkish books, the instructional style seems stronger than the humorous style (Gönen, 1993). On the contrary, Veziroğlu and Gönen (2013) claimed that the objectives explained in the Preschool Education Program published by the Ministry of National Education (2013) were involved at a rate of 18.5% in 250 Turkish picture books. It is suggested that the humorous wording which is supported by the appropriate illustrations could support the child's creativity (Al Otaiba, 2004). It is important for one to gain pleasure in reading during adulthood. When children improve their emotional interactions with the books and learn while getting pleasure and fun, their motivations for further readings get stronger. Although there is a tendency in the U.S. that through the picture books the academic knowledge and skills could be thought to the children, the feelings of joy in reading picture books could support some particular skills such as problem solving, discussion, claiming new ideas, and fluency in reading and writing (Jalongo, 2004). It is revealed that the pleasure in reading in the early stages in life is essential in the development of reading habits (Uluğ&Bayraktar, 2014).

Tuğrul, Metin Aslan, Ertürk, and Özen Altınkaynak (2014) revealed that the book reading process was perceived as a "work" by the six years old attending the kindergarten. The young children perceived book reading as a work because of its teacher directed nature just as writing. Thus the reading process needs to be self-directed by the child so that the child enjoys reading and naturally improves his reading habits. Besides the joyful nature of the picture books, the richness of book centers at the preschools is important so that the child himself choose the books he wants to read and this prevents him from reading the same books again and again (Gönen, 1993). Külük (2013) emphasized the artistic and aesthetic content of the picture books is also effective on the development of a child's artistic taste. The artistic weakness in the Turkish picture books is another critique raised by the research (Gönen, 1993). Accordingly, comparably low quality in the general printing quality and exterior features of the Turkish books are observed in the study.

In this study, 25 Turkish and 25 American picture books were analyzed. From the analysis, it appears that the interior and exterior features of books differentiate by the social, cultural, and economic structures of the societies. In general, the cost of the American books is higher because of the high quality of exterior features whereas the financially convenient exterior features are followed in Turkish books. The American books are viewed as more creative, fun and artistic in pictures, wording, and subject, whereas the Turkish books are more organized, formal and instructive in pictures and wording style. Ünlü Çetin and Çir

(2016) also indicated that the variation in the picture books' picturing techniques was observable in different countries due to the social and economic differences.

Within the scope of those results, the following suggestions are provided. The Turkish books enriched with more creativity and sense of humor should create more interest in picture books and support the child's development in those areas. Also, the information provided about the authors and publishers should support their visibility both for the readers and the market. The quality hard covering and silk binding is mostly used in the American books heighten the prices for the readers but also enhance the second hand market for the picture books. The Turkish picture books mostly have a poor binding which result in fast tearing and wearing thus the second hand market is not developed especially for children's books and the books are conveyed to close friends or relatives after the first hand use. However, it is clear that the quality binding promotes the durability of the children's books. As understood from the analysis, although there are some quality differences in some dimensions, the mean scores are not that different in all dimensions. It is assumed that supporting the writers and illustrators' initiatives could result in more quality publications in Turkish child literature and develop the market in the future.

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