

The analysis of the teacher views on the Anatolian Tales published by the Ministry of National Education for preschool children

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ABSTRACT

The present study was conducted to determine the views of preschool teachers on the Preschool Anatolian Tales textbook published by the Ministry of National Education. The case study method, a qualitative research model, was employed in the study. The study group included 20 pre-school teachers employed in various kindergartens serving the Eyyübiye district in Şanlıurfa province, Turkey, and assigned with the purposive sampling method, who had the Preschool Anatolian Tales Education Set in their school and stated that they examined these tales and conducted related activities with children. The study data were collected with a semi-structured interview form. Data analysis was conducted with the content analysis method. The participating teachers stated that the Preschool Anatolian Tales textbook was suitable for the level of the students, contributed to the development of social, emotional, language, critical and creative thinking skills, introduced Turkish culture to the children, and expressed views on the size and illustrations in the book.

Keywords: Preschool, culture, Anatolian Tales.

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INTRODUCTION

Fairy tales that start with the phrase “once upon a time” and play a key role in childhood are among the significant cultural elements in society and lead to positive associations in individuals. There are several definitions of the term tale; however, the dictionary describes the tale as “a literary folkloric and imaginary genre that generally narrates the experiences of individuals, animals, witches, genies, giants, fairies, etc. based on oral tradition” (TDK, 2021). Tales improve children's imagination and allow them to have an idea about the real world and social values. Tales are ornamented with nursery rhymes, descriptions and idioms that extend the vocabulary and support the language development of children.

The Anatolian region has hosted several civilizations and transferred a rich cultural heritage. This cultural heritage is rich in fairy tales. Demiray (1996) wrote that

“the Anatolian land smells of fairy tales. Tales feed us on its mountains, plains and plateaus. We are fascinated by fairy tales in both villages and cities. As you pass by a tomb, sip water at a spring, talk with a shepherd, or sit in a village room, you can see the flowers of fairy tales everywhere.”

The tales that have been passed down from generation to generation for centuries have played a key role in the lives of children. Today, educators accepted that fairy tales have significant contributions to the education of children, support their creativity and imagination, and affect learning the native language. The benefits and significance of fairy tales have been emphasized in the literature (Kirişçigil Doğan, 2012). Tales create a social memory via symbols that mostly describe socio-cultural attributes, traditions, customs, moral and aesthetic values in society (Helimoğlu Yavuz, 2014).

Children's books significantly affect the development of children. Every child has the right to have a relationship with books, experience life with books, and perceive the books. Even the children who cannot read or experience speech impediments have this right. Children's literature not only supports language development in early childhood but also allow the child to improve self-knowledge, help the socialization of the child, acquire artistic and cultural experiences and the joy of reading (Ciravoğlu, 2000; cited by Kirişçigil Doğan, 2012).

A child with typical growth and development has certain spiritual needs as well as natural needs. Oral and written works play a key role in the fulfillment of these needs. However, providing opportunities for the child to flick through and read adequate books, especially for those who are interested in books, would accelerate the typical development (Oğuzkan, 2006).

Children's literature allows the children to recognize their physical traits. It contributes to the cognitive development of the child through knowledge. It helps develop the native language, concentration and listening skills, and personality. It facilitates the learning of abstract concepts by accelerating emotional and conceptual development. Through socialization, it raises awareness and sensitivity for others. It improves the critical and creative thinking skills of the children. It fulfills their entertainment and recreational needs and improves their interest in the arts (Arıcı, 2012).

Tale is a children's literature genre that becomes a part of the imagination of preschool children due to the visual and linguistic narrative and allows them to recognize the subtleties of the native language. Thus, the language,

- 1) Golden Ax
- 2) The Chicken that Lays Golden Eggs
- 3) The Lion and the Mouse
- 4) The Lion, the Fox and the Deer
- 5) The Sparrow who was stung on the Feet
- 6) Ayşe, Fatma and Sheep
- 7) Mrs. Louse and Mr. Flea
- 8) When the Spouse Could Not Find the Spouse
- 9) Grandpa Now
- 10) The Crow and the Fox
- 11) Reading Bear
- 12) The Puppy and the Cat
- 13) The Rabbit and the Hedgehog
- 14) The Fox and the Donkey
- 15) The Fox and the Stork

Fairy tales play a key role in the instruction of national and universal values, the development of the imagination of the child, the comprehension of abstract concepts, the development of language skills, and learning the values of the society, and having fun (Karatay, 2007). For children to benefit from fairy tales, these books could possess certain qualities. Thus, the physical properties,

content, messages, pictures, design, etc. of the fairy tale books should adopt certain basic principles. Tales authored based on these principles could be original, creative and qualified.

The Anatolian Tales Project was developed by the Ministry of National Education, General Directorate of Teacher Training and the UNESCO Turkish National Commission, and aimed to instruct cultural values and develop the imagination of the children. The project included seven stages. In the first stage, an academic committee was formed to curate Anatolian tales. In the second stage, 80 fairy tales examined by the field experts were categorized for pre-school, 1st and 2nd grade and 3rd and 4th grade children. In the third phase, tales were illustrated by fine arts high school students. In the fourth stage, the design of the fairy tales educational set was planned for digital publishing and the development of fairy tale game cards. In the fifth stage, Anatolian Tales Painting Exhibitions were planned in each one of the seven regions in Turkey and abroad with the sponsorship of UNESCO. The sixth stage included storytelling training. This organization was included in the professional development plan and is primarily aimed at the training of pre-school and classroom teachers. The last stage aimed to provide access for children with visual and auditory impairments by developing an audiobook and videos in sign language, and the establishment of Anadolu Fairy Tale Houses in every province (Kılıç, 2019). The fairy tales included in the set are presented below:

content and illustrations in fairy tale books should be analyzed.

Within the scope of the Anatolian Tales Project, Pre-School Anatolian Tales Education Set was printed in 11 thousand copies and distributed to schools free of charge (Anadolu Agency, 2021). The literature review did not reveal a study on the education set. The research problem in the present study included the analysis of the views of preschool teachers on Preschool Anatolian Tales published by the Ministry of National Education.

The aim of the study

It could be expected that the analysis of the Preschool Anatolian Tales set developed by the Ministry of National Education and distributed free of charge to pre-school education institutions based on the views of the teachers who had the chance to instruct these sets would contribute to the literature. It could be suggested that the present study findings would serve as recommendations for future fairy tale books. The main aim of the present study was to determine the views of the preschool

teachers on Preschool Anatolian Tales Education Set published by the Ministry of National Education. Thus, the following research problems were determined:

1. What are the views of the teachers on the suitability of the topics and protagonists in Preschool Anatolian Tales for the children's level?
2. What are the views of the teachers on the contribution of the Preschool Anatolian Tales to the critical and creative thinking skills of the children?
3. What are the views of the teachers on the contribution of the Preschool Anatolian Tales to the social and emotional development of the children?
4. What are the views of the teachers on the contribution of the Preschool Anatolian Tales to the language development of the children?
5. What are the views of the teachers on the size and illustrations of the Preschool Anatolian Tales set?
6. What are the views of the teachers on the introduction of national culture in the Preschool Anatolian Tales set?

METHOD

Research model

The study was conducted with the case study method, a qualitative research method, since the study aimed to determine the views of preschool teachers on Preschool Anatolian Tales Education Set. This method was preferred to reveal detailed views and perceptions of the

participants. Case studies are employed for the in-depth investigation of a current phenomenon and to obtain detailed data. In case studies, the factors associated with the phenomenon are analyzed with a holistic approach and the study focuses on the impact of these factors on the phenomenon or the impact of the phenomenon on these factors (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). In the study, a semi-structured interview form was employed to determine the views and experiences of the participants. Content analysis was adopted to analyze the study data.

Participants

In the study, the convenience sampling method, a purposive sampling method, was employed to assign the study group. Thus, a convenient, rapid, and practical method was preferred (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). The study participants included 20 volunteering pre-school teachers who were employed in various kindergartens in Eyyübiye district of Şanlıurfa province, Turkey, and had the Preschool Anatolian Tales Education Set in their schools and stated that they examined these tales and applied them with children. Participant demographics are presented in Table 1.

As seen in Table 1, 19 (95%) participants were female and 1 (5%) was male. The professional seniority of the teachers was mostly 0 to 5 years ($n = 15$; 75%). It was observed that the majority of the participants had an undergraduate degree ($n = 19$; 95%) and most took the children's literature course ($n = 19$; 95%).

Table 1. Demographic information of preschool teachers participating in the research.

Personal Info		n	%
Gender	Female	19	95
	Male	1	5
	Total	20	100
Seniority	0-5 years	15	80
	6-10 years	5	20
	11-15 years	0	
	16-20 years	0	
	21 years and above	0	
	Total	20	100
Education level	Associate degree	0	
	Undergraduate	19	95
	Master's	1	5
	PhD	0	
	Total	20	100
Attended children's literature course	Yes	19	95
	No	1	5
	Total	20	100

Data collection instrument

The study data were collected with a semi-structured interview form developed by the authors. The semi-structured interview form was developed based on study objectives and the literature review. Expert opinion was obtained during the development of the form from the faculty members employed at İnönü University (two education program and science instruction specialists, and two pre-school education specialists) and the form was reviewed based on the expert views. A pilot scheme was conducted with three pre-school teachers, who were not included in the study sample, and it was observed that there were no problems associated with the form. The semi-structured form included 4 demographic data questions and 6 open-ended questions. The interview form questions were as follows:

- 1) Are the topics and protagonists in Preschool Anatolian Tales adequate for the level of the children?
- 2) Could the Preschool Anatolian Tales improve the critical and creative thinking skills of the children? Please elaborate.
- 3) Could the Preschool Anatolian Tales contribute to the social and emotional development of the children?
- 4) Could the Preschool Anatolian Tales contribute to the language development of the children?
- 5) How do you find the size and illustrations of the Preschool Anatolian Tales? Please elaborate.
- 6) Could the Preschool Anatolian Tales introduce Turkish culture to the children?

Data collection and analysis

The study data were collected during the 2020-2021 academic year spring semester. The data were collected on the Google Form application. The form was developed with the Google Form application and digital invitations were sent to the teachers.

The study data were analyzed with the content analysis technique. In content analysis, similar data are categorized based on certain concepts and themes and interpreted to produce comprehensible findings (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2016). Certain steps are followed in content

analysis. In the first step, the views of the teachers were reviewed and coded based on common concepts. Then, the categories were determined based on the similarities in the data. Themes were determined by grouping the categories. The data were organized based on the themes and presented to maintain comprehensibility. Finally, the findings were described and interpreted.

Direct quotes were also included in the study to reflect the views of the participants accurately. Participating teachers are coded as T1, T2, ... T20.

FINDINGS

Teacher views on the adequacy of preschool Anatolian Tales topics and protagonists for the student level

As seen in Table 2, 9 (45%) preschool teachers stated that the protagonists and themes in Preschool Anatolian Tales were adequate for the level of the children. 4 teachers (20%) stated that the topics were not suitable for the level of the children, 4 (20%) teachers stated that the tales included negative situations, and 3 (15%) stated that the protagonists were adequate for the level of the children. Certain teacher views are presented below:

T2: *"I think it was adequate for the age and developmental level of the children. The topics were real life topics, the language was simple, and the tales were not long, which prevented the boredom factor."*

T12: *"The protagonists are suitable for the level of the children, but the topics and plots are not suitable for their age."*

T19: *"The topics of the tales in the set are generally suitable for the level of children, but there are negative and violent phrases in certain tales."*

The contribution of the preschool Anatolian Tales to critical and creative thinking skills of the children based on teacher views

As seen in Table 3, 9 (45%) teachers stated that Preschool Anatolian Tales did not contribute to critical

Table 2. Opinions of teachers on the suitability of the themes and heroes in Preschool Anatolian Tales for the level of children.

Theme	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Topics and protagonists are adequate for the student level	9	45
Topics are not adequate for the student level	4	20
The tales include negative situations	4	20
Protagonists are adequate for the student level	3	15

Table 3. Opinions of teachers on the evaluation of Preschool Anatolian Tales in terms of critical and creative thinking of children.

Theme	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
No contribution to critical and creative thinking	9	45
Supports imagination	5	25
Contributes to the development of different perspectives	6	30

and creative thinking skills of the children, 5 (25%) stated that they supported children's imagination, and 6 (30%) stated that they contributed to the development of different perspectives. Certain teacher views are as follows:

T18: "These tales do not have such an effect since they do not encourage children to think and question."

T2: "They were a little weak in terms of creativity. Classical fairy tales could be adapted to the present conditions. Codes about fairy tale characters could be added at the end of the fairy tales. Multiple achievements could be targeted."

T19: "After reading the fairy tales, I ask children questions about the book. For example, what could he have felt, what would you do if you were in his shoes, children could give different answers; thus, they contribute."

T15: "Sometimes I interrupt the tale and ask the children to find a solution to the problem. This allows creative thinking in the children."

The contribution of the preschool Anatolian Tales to the social and emotional development of the children based on teacher views

As seen in Table 4, 8 (40%) preschool teachers stated that Preschool Anatolian Tales supported the social and emotional development of children, 4 (20%) stated that they did not contribute to social and emotional development, 6 (30%) stated that they supported children's social relations, 2 (10%) stated that they promote the self-awareness of the children about their emotions. Certain teacher views were as follows:

T2: "Tales are adequate for drama, the significance of drama in preschool education could not be neglected. Thus, they support the social development of children. About emotional development, they instill love, adequacy and sharing in children."

T16: "They do not lead to any social and emotional change in children."

T6: "I consider fairy tales very useful socially and emotionally since they include various messages for children and provide values education."

T14: "Children could empathize with the fairy tale topics; thus, their contribution is positive."

The contribution of the preschool Anatolian Tales to the language development of the children based on teacher views

As seen in Table 5, 5 (25%) teachers stated that Preschool Anatolian Tales improved children's vocabulary, 11 (55%) stated that they developed their language skills, and 4 (20%) stated that they did not contribute to language development. Certain teacher views are presented below:

T1: "It encourages them to learn new words or to speak with a proper sentence structure."

T2: "The language is simple and comprehensible. Children experienced no difficulties in telling the tales. There are no complex sentences. I think that the students acquired the skills of using the voice adequately, forming sentences with the syntax rules, using language in communication, vocabulary development skills, and creating stories and compositions using visual materials."

T5: "It was good that rhymes were included in the introduction of the books. Rhymes were quite fluent and comprehensible. However, since the book content was not adequate, the tales did not support the language development."

Teacher views on the size and illustrations of the preschool Anatolian Tales book

As seen in Table 6, 8 (40%) teachers considered the size and illustrations of the Preschool Anatolian Tales books adequate, 2 (10%) teachers stated that the book size should be larger, and 2 (10%) stated that the illustrations should be changed. Eight participants (40%) stated that the page structure, size and illustrations of the fairy tale books were not adequate. Certain teacher views were as follows:

T6: "The size was standard, the illustrations were beautiful and high quality. The vividness of the paintings impressed me."

Table 4. Opinions of the teachers on the evaluation of Preschool Anatolian Tales in terms of their contribution to the social and emotional development of children.

Theme	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Supports social and emotional development	8	40
Does not support social and emotional development	4	20
Supports social relationships between the children	6	30
Supports the self-awareness of the children about their emotions	2	10

Table 5. Opinions of teachers on the evaluation of Preschool Anatolian Tales in terms of their contribution to children's language development.

Theme	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Improvement of vocabulary	5	25
Development of language skills	11	55
No contribution to language skills	4	20

Table 6. Teachers' views on the size and illustration of Preschool Anatolian Tales books.

Theme	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
The size and illustrations of the book were ideal	8	40
The book size should be larger	2	10
The illustrations should be changed	2	10
The size and illustrations of the book were not adequate	8	40

T19: "The books could have been a little bigger. It would be nice if the illustrations were in more vibrant colors."

T12: "In my opinion, the book size was sufficient, but the illustrations were not suitable for preschool children."

T1: "The size was suitable, but the structure was not. Because the paper could wear out quite quickly. The illustrations could be a little livelier to raise the interest of the children."

The introduction of the Turkish culture in the preschool Anatolian Tales based on teacher views

As seen in Table 7, 9 (45%) teachers stated that Preschool Anatolian Tales contributed to the promotion of

the Turkish culture, and 7 (35%) stated that they played a role in the transfer of cultural heritage. Two teachers (10%) stated that these tales did not include cultural values, and 2 (10%) stated that the tales should be improved to promote the Turkish culture. Certain teacher views were as follows:

T6: "Every nation has cultural elements. Fairy tales are also an important part of our culture. I find them very successful and beneficial in the promotion of Turkish culture and instruction of our values."

T18: "Tales could not adequately transfer our cultural traditions to the children."

T16: "It was good to transfer our cultural heritage to children, but fairy tales should be improved."

T17: "They help children learn our culture."

Table 7. Opinions of teachers about Preschool Anatolian Tales introducing our culture to children.

Theme	Frequency (f)	Percentage (%)
Contributes to the promotion of the culture	9	45
Plays a role in the transfer of the cultural heritage	7	35
Ignores cultural values	2	10
The tales should be improved	2	10

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the present study, where the views of the teachers on Preschool Anatolian Tales Education Set were investigated, the participating teachers stated different views on the adequacy of the tale topics and protagonists for the level of children as seen in Table 2. While 60% of the teachers stated that the topics and protagonists were adequate for the level of the children, 40% stated that the topics and protagonists were not adequate for the level of children, and fairy tales included negative situations. This could be due to the effect of teacher perceptions about the fairy tales based on their personal points of view. Dağlıoğlu and Çakmak (2009) argued that when children's books are not developed with rigorous attention, the negative elements in the books could lead to several negative developmental outcomes such as delay in children's development, anxiety and fear, violent tendencies, and a decrease in self-esteem.

It was concluded that there was no consensus among the teachers about the contribution of the Preschool Anatolian Tales to critical and creative thinking skills. As seen in Table 3, 45% of the teachers stated that fairy tales did not contribute to critical and creative thinking skills, while 55% stated that these fairy tales supported children's imagination and led to the development of different perspectives. Since the teachers employed different techniques when reading the fairy tales could have led to this finding. Because certain teachers stated that they interrupted the reading and created the rest of the tale with the children, and some stated that the children tried to offer different solutions to the problems in the tales. In a study, Metin (2019) concluded that musical stories and fairy tales positively affected the creativity of preschool children. Çevirme (2021) recommended the employment of fairy tales in activities that aim the development of critical thinking skills in non-formal and formal education environments.

As seen in Table 4, 80% of the participating teachers stated that Preschool Anatolian Tales had positive contributions to the social and emotional development of children. In a study conducted by Şahin (2011), teachers stated that fairy tales contributed to the psychosocial development of children. These teacher views were consistent with the reports in the literature that fairy tales supported the social and emotional development of children (Gedik, 2020; Arıcı, 2012; Şahin 2011).

As seen in Table 5, 80% of the participating teachers stated that Preschool Anatolian Tales supported the language development of children. Since the tales included interesting proverbs, idioms, reduplications and nursery rhymes and elements that improved children's vocabulary could have influenced these teacher views. Türkben (2018) and Şahin (2011) reported similar results in the studies that investigated fairy tales based on the views of the teachers. Kholmurodova (2021) suggested

that tales, which are rich language development resources, should be employed for the development of language skills. According to Karatay (2007), the tales should be employed for the acquisition of comprehension and expression skills, especially for the development of listening and speech skills.

It was concluded that there was no consensus about the size and illustrations of the Preschool Anatolian Tales books among the teachers. As seen in Table 6, 40% of the teachers stated that the size and illustrations of the books were ideal, and 40% stated that the page structure, size and illustrations of the books were not adequate. Certain teachers stated that the size and illustrations of the fairy tale books should be changed. Those who design the book illustrations and those who author the texts should know the developmental traits of the children (Ulutaş, 2017). Preschool Anatolian Tales were illustrated by Fine Arts High School students. Thus, it could be suggested that high school students were not proficient in the developmental traits of the children. Since the illustrations that are inconsistent with the book content would reduce the interest of the child in the book, the illustrations in children's books should be interesting (Kara, 2012). Erdal (2006) reviewed the children's books published by the Ministry of National Education and reported that the associations between the text and the illustrations in these books were not adequate and the pictures were artistically poor.

As seen in Table 7, 80% of the participating teachers stated that Preschool Anatolian Tales contributed to the introduction of the Turkish culture to children and helped transfer the cultural heritage. Öztürk et al. (2021) investigated the views of preschool teachers on cultural heritage education and reported that tales are among the important cultural heritage elements, and tales could be employed in cultural heritage education in preschool age. The role of fairy tales in the transfer of culture could not be denied. The analysis of a fairy tale would reveal the traditions, values, perspectives and social relationships in society. Since fairy tales can transfer cultural heritage, they are important for the acquisition of the cultural values of a society (Gedik, 2020).

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, the following could be recommended about the Preschool Anatolian Tales:

- Teachers expressed concerns about the adequacy of the themes and protagonists in the Preschool Anatolian Tales for the children. Thus, negative phenomena such as violence and fear should be removed from fairy tales.
- Certain teachers stated that Preschool Anatolian Tales did not contribute to critical and creative thinking skills. Thus, the tales should include elements that would

support the critical, inquisitive and creative thinking skills of the children.

- Certain teachers considered the size of the Preschool Anatolian Tales books inadequate for the children and stated that the fairy tale books should be larger. Thus, the size of the fairy tale books should be extended in new editions.

- Certain teachers stated that the illustrations in Preschool Anatolian Tales were not adequate for the children and should be changed. Thus, the illustrations in fairy tales should be re-evaluated and edited to increase the interest of the children.

- Since the participating teachers stated that Preschool Anatolian Tales contributed to the social and emotional and language development of the children, improved their imagination, contributed to the promotion of the Turkish culture and helped transfer the cultural heritage, it could be recommended that these sets should be distributed to all pre-school education institutions.

- Further research should be conducted on Preschool Anatolian Tales Education Set to improve different dimensions of the books such as content and narration.

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