

Contributions of the Fairy Tales to the Children on the Basis of the Teachers' Views

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 **Abdülkadir Kabaday**

Necmettin Erbakan University A. K. Faculty of Education Preschool Department, Konya, Turkey.
Email: akkabadayi03@gmail.com Tel: 05056163767

ABSTRACT

Having a worldwide association the aims of fairy tales are to preserve, promote, and develop this ancient teaching art. Fairy tales are also known as the magic atmosphere telling the reality indirectly and preparing the children for the future while nurturing and enriching their spirits. Thirty-two preschool teachers participated in this qualitative study via interview. The participants were required to respond the open-ended questions in written form. This study is conducted to analyze the characteristics of fairy tale books and the contributions of the tale telling to the children's various domains such as cognitive, language, emotional, social, psycho-motor via teachers' views. In this study, first, the definition and educational values of telling fairy tales was explained. Later, the data handled from the study were analyzed through content analysis technique and the findings were evaluated and interpreted. As a last remark, some recommendations were made to the teachers and parents about the choice of telling fairy tales. As a result of the evaluation, it was found out what fairy tales are popular among the children and that telling tale contributed children's cognitive, moral, language, psycho-motor, social, personal, socio-emotional etc., domains.

Keywords: *Fairy tales, Turkish, domains, Children, Characteristics of the books, Popular fairy tales.*

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Highlights of this paper

- Fairy tales aim to preserve, promote, and develop this ancient teaching art.
- This study aims to analyze the characteristics of fairy tale books and the contributions of the tale-telling to the children's various domains such as cognitive, language, emotional, social, psycho- motor via teachers' views.

1. INTRODUCTION

Human beings have used various ways to express their feelings and emotions. One of these ways is the traditional tale telling which is the folk products reflecting childish consciousness best. In addition to this, tale telling is the magic atmosphere telling the reality indirectly and preparing the children for the future while nurturing and enriching children's spirits.

Tales are said to enhance forming the children's imagination skills, acknowledge them outer world by socializing, and teach them to use their mother tongue accurately. Children tend to learn that the good would be rewarded while the evil would be punished in the end.

Since fairy tales are very effective folk trainer tool they should be made good use of training the children.

Rusnak (2012) stated that the fairy tale genre has kept its status of extraordinary receptive support in child audiences at the border of both the pre-pubescent and pubescent age. 3–9 years of age children can be considered as tale-telling periods. The children can also be said to enjoy lyrics, didactics and fables at this age.

Original stylistics of the tale telling, which has been the most important entertainment and educational tools for ages, has enchanted the children and taken them to the different worlds where it integrates them to the heroes and the heroines of the fairy tales.

Children find themselves in the fairy tales, assimilate and feel them. They feel the hero and heroines of the tales nearer themselves. They like involving the adventures in the tales. Fairy tales for the children are the same as the plays played in the imaginary world (Sirin, 2000).

2. BACKGROUND

Fairy tales stand first in the folk products which draw preschoolers' attention (Sirin, 2000) and they are the first written source to which the preschoolers are introduced as it is a good way to combine instruction and entertainment (Stockdale, 1995). Furthermore, Sahin (2011) found that preschool teachers stated that fairy tales contributed to language, emotional, psychological cognitive, social and moral development of the children.

Studies have shown that successful approaches to storytelling, approaches that make the story comprehensible and absorbing, vary according to children's needs, and are tailored to the child's reaction and to the interactional situation between the child and the storyteller (Lee, 2012).

Fairy tales, some of whose heroes and heroines are animals and supernatural creatures and whose events occurred in fairy world, are named as verbal narration types and simplified forms of the real world although they are imaginary products they could make the preschoolers believe (Karatay, 2007; Aral, 2008; Artun, 2008; Çağmlar, 2008; Eker, 2008; Emeksiz, 2008; Kandır *et al.*, 2008; Osetinsky, 2009; Gönen *et al.*, 2011).

Fairy tales can be so beneficial that they help a person find his own solutions. This person finds these solutions by inwardly reflecting on what the story implies about his life at that time.

The fairy-tale hero may often have to, for a while, make his way through on his own, but he always finds help when he needs it, and he always wins through. The fairy-tale hero and his fate help give children hope that they too can win through. As the children at an early stage cannot comprehend abstract concepts and their attention span is quite short the tales to be told to the children should contain live, short, and entertaining events (Aral, 2008).

Despite some experts, make several justifications of using fairy tales in teaching language skills and cultures (Danandjaja, 1984; Cohen, 1990) however, some of them approach the issue of teaching culture with some kind of reservation (Danandjaja, 1984). For instance, Bada (2000) reminds us that awareness of cultural values and societal characteristics does not necessarily invite the learner to conform to such values, since they are there to “refine the self so that it can take a more universal and less egoistic form” (p.100).

After the introduction of the Direct Method into the language teaching, cultural elements began to be considered as an important aspect of learning the language, and in our age, cultural background knowledge is accepted as a must in teaching language. It is considered that language teaching is culture teaching, and someone involved in teaching language is also involved in teaching culture at the same time. Language does not exist in a vacuum, so language learners should be aware of the context in which the target language is used i.e., they should also learn about the target culture. In this respect, this statement is well supported that language has no independent existence: it exists only in the brains and mouths and ears and hands and eyes of its user.

Research has indicated that students who acquire a good understanding of the alphabetic principle in the early stages of literacy development (Adams, 1990; Share and Stanovich, 1995) and have well developed phonological awareness (Snow *et al.*, 1998) possess a greater chance for reading success. In addition to this, while listening to tales, children develop a sense of structure that will later help them to comprehend the more complex stories of literature since they are the oldest form of literature (Pedersen, 1995).

It is also advised for the teachers to be ‘in charge of the proceedings’ (Skehan, 1996) with a traditional model of teaching, should not ignore the possibility of using children’s stories for the production of a wide variety of language and learning activities.

It can be deduced that fairy tales are the effective tools to nurture the moral imagination. They are stated to awaken and enliven the moral imagination of the children. From the fairy tales children learn that courage is the ultimate test of good character, that honesty is essential for trust and harmony among persons, and that humility and a magnanimous spirit are goods greater than the prizes won by selfishness, pride, or the unscrupulous exercise of position and power. Furthermore, it was explained by Görgü (2006) that the fairy tales are effective stimuli in the process of children’s affective and cognitive domains. It was also explained that the short stories offer variabilities and possibilities to educate the pupils and children from the pedagogical point of view in that it results in the discussions of the story’s linguistic, cognitive and stylistic structures; transferring of situations into the practical, cognitive and emotional plan; highlighting the necessity of uniting the pedagogical objectives in stressing on the adult-child cooperation patterns (Kabadayi, 2005; Kadiu and Treska, 2016).

It is emphasized that children’s moral needs and education can be nurtured by literary sources like fairy tales (Bennett, 1996a;1996). A good moral education addresses both the cognitive and affective dimensions of human nature. Fairy tales are an irreplaceable medium of this kind of moral education.

3. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The aim of the study was to analyze the contributions of the tale telling to the children’s various domains such as cognitive, language, emotional, social, and psycho-motor and the popularity and the characteristics of fairy tale books via preschool teachers’ views.

4. ANALYTICAL PROCEDURE

The current study was designed on survey research model as a qualitative method. Qualitative research begins with an intention to explore a particular area, collects “data” including observations and interviews, and generates

ideas and hypotheses from these data largely through what is known as inductive reasoning (Britten, 1996). If the objective of the research was to explore, interpret, or obtain a deeper understanding of a particular issue, qualitative methods were almost certainly the most appropriate ones to use (Drummond *et al.*, 1997). Survey researches include cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires or structured interviews for data collection, with the intent of generalizing from a sample to a population (Creswell, 2003). This study is also a case study because it fits well with the aims and research questions of the present study, which focuses on gathering exploratory data on global education in Turkey. A case study can focus on a person, group, social setting or a community and it allows gathering a wide range of data by means of documents and interviews (Berg, 1998; Yin, 2003). In this study, preschool teachers were required to respond the open-ended questions in written form. In this qualitative study, the participants were also required to define the contribution of the fairy tales to the various domains of the preschoolers, and the most popular story books of preschoolers, and the behaviors children acquire while telling tales.

5. PARTICIPANTS

In this study, 32 preschool teachers participated as a random sampling technique from various preschools of Konya. 30 of the participants were female and 2 of them were male. The study shows that the vast majority of the participants (93.7 %) are female, which generally reflects current trends within the field of preschool education. 8 out of them belonged to 23-26 age group, 10 out of them were 27-30, 12 of them were 31-33 and 2 of them were above 34. 12 out of the participants have 0-5 years teaching experience, 14 out of them has 6-10 years teaching experience, 6 out of them have above 10 years teaching experience.

6. FINDINGS

The participants were asked to write what the contributions of the fairy tales to the various domains of the children. The participants responded to the open-ended question more than one category. Therefore, the percentage distributions of the preschool teachers comprised more domains. 81 percent of the participants stated that tale telling contributed language development of the children, 68 percent of them agreed that fairy tales developed critical and creative thinking of the children, 37 percent of them were of the opinion that tale telling supported cognitive domain, 50 percent of them explained tale telling accelerated socio-emotional development of the children, 31 percent of them stated that fairy tales supported the personal development of them, while 27 percent of them were of the opinion that telling tale raised children's reading awareness Table 1.

6.1. The participants were required to respond the question of "To what domains of children the fairy tales contribute?"

Table-1. Contributions of the tales to the domains of the children.

Domains ¹	(f)	(%)
Language development	26	81.2
Creative and critical thinking	22	68.7
Socio-emotional	16	50.0
Cognitive	12	37.5
Personal	10	31.2
Reading awareness	6	27.2

It was revealed that each category produced its sub-themes by the participants as shown below:

¹ The participants rated more than one option

6.1.1. Contributions of Tales in Respect of Language Development

Elley (1989) found that storytelling resulted in a 15 % improvement on vocabulary for ESL children when a story was told once; but their improvement increased to 40 % when the story was repeated three times with words clearly explained by teachers. It was also supported by the participants that their students' *listening and speaking skills* would improve as they listened to the tales told by teachers. In line with these skills, they pointed out that their *communicative skills* would also develop as they would interact and communicate with the peers and the teachers in the classroom atmosphere. The fact that the participants pointed out their students' *accurate pronunciation improvement* supports the items above mentioned. Furthermore, from teachers' perspective, the students in question would be motivated to *the rhyming of the language* spoken as practice makes person perfect. Having a good command of phonological awareness and the alphabetic principle helps make fluency and vocabulary development possible and enables the learner to focus on gaining meaning from the text (Al-Hazza *et al.*, 2008). As a result of the improvement of their listening/speaking and communicative skills, as the participants emphasized, their vocabulary treasures would normally be improved.

By emphasizing the importance of the tale telling from child perspectives Sahin (2011) found that the teachers and the parents agreed that telling tale to the children before going to the bed would improve their vocabulary usage and mother tongue.

6.1.2. Contributions of Tales in Respect of Cognitive Development

The participants are of the opinion that telling fairy tales would improve cognitive domains of the children in line with this, children's' other domains related to cognitive one *including reason – result relation skills between phenomena, problem solving skills, attention focusing span skills, chronologic ordering skills* as sub-themes. It is also supported that the child matures physically and mentally at this age, its naïve concrete-illustrative thinking develops by means of fairy tales (Rusnak, 2012). Furthermore, White (1980) used the technique on children aged 4 - 6,5 and he explained that such stories would develop children's memories and other cognitive functions.

6.1.3. Contributions of Tales in Respect of Socio-Emotional Development

The participants stated that telling fairy tales would help the children recognize and discover different characters and their roles, emotions, make reason - result relations between emotions and improve their empathy skills as sub-themes of their socio-emotional development. It is also supported that 0-6 preschool period is critical period in which preschoolers' cognitive, biological, physical, emotional, personal and social domains develop rapidly. This sensitive period is supported by nature and nurture processes in which popular culture affect the preschoolers' acculturation formal or informal ways (Altıntaş, 2008).

6.1.4. Contributions of Tales in Respect of Personal Development

It was found out that fairy tales could improving children's taking role model and improving recognition of opposite characters, identification of positive characters and their behaviors as sub-themes of their personal development. In line with these findings, it is also explained that the most important element in fairy tales is the moral choice presented to the hero. The child learns that choices have consequences, and the child can choose what kind of person she wants to be (www.cslakin.com).

6.1.5. Contributions of Tales in Respect of Critical Thinking Development

The participants stated that telling fairy tales would improve children’s critical thinking skills comprising creative thinking skills, making meaningful relations between reality and imagination, acquiring spiritual relieving by entering imaginary world as sub-themes. Bettelheim (1976) described well why fairy tales can be so valuable to children in respect of their critical thinking improvement if they are given the chance as follows:

Whatever may be true in reality, the child who listens to fairy tales comes to imagine and believe that out of love for him his parent is willing to risk his life to bring him the present he most desires. In his turn, such a child believes that he is worthy of such devotion, because he would be willing to sacrifice his life out of love for his parent (310).

It is true that the goal of fairy tales is to help our children become able to respond competently to any situation life puts before them.

6.1.6. Contributions of Tales in Respect of Reading Awareness

The participants pointed out that telling tales would improve children’s reading awareness in addition to their improving positive attitudes to reading and acquiring the love of book reading and making friendship with the books and raising early literacy awareness. It is also supported that teaching children of this age is not easy, but it is certainly challenging. Brewster insists that one of the seven main features of good primary practice is ‘reading literature for enjoyment, responding to it critically and using that reading for learning’ (Brewster, 1991).

6.2. The Participants Were Asked to Respond the Question of “What characteristics the fairy tales books should include?”

The participants emphasized that the fairy tales books should comprise visual aids as “pictures”, linguistic aids as “language use”, accuracy as “style”, and the content as “theme” respectively Table 2.

Table-2. The characteristics of the story-books.

Characteristics*	(f)	(%)
Pictures	13	40.6
Language use	12	37.5
Style	8	25.0
Theme	5	15.6

6.2.1. Pictures of the Books

13 out of 32 participants pointed out that the pictures of the books should be large enough for the children to see, should be easy to comment, should be colorful and should not be confusing, should not include abstract picturing. In addition to this, the pictures on the cover should be interesting, the characters in the pictures should be consistent with each other in every page and there should be expression on the one page and a picture of it on the other one. Pictures in the books influence students’ interest in books. Gönen et al. (2011) supported that pictures should be prepared by writers and artists concertedly and they should help to explain the text.

6.2.2. Use of Language

12 out of 32 participants emphasized in the books that the expressions like idioms, jingles and rhymes children enjoy should be used, simple and understandable language should be used and the sentences should not be too long and complex. Erbay and Aydoğan (2006) found out that the authors of children books used simple past tense at 83 percent as the children pronounce and learn the patterns easier than the other tenses.

6.2.3. *Style of the Books*

8 out of 32 The participants explained that the books should display fluent language styles, comprise model and sample characters and include contrast characters like good and evils, but should not include over exaggeration. Supporting these findings, [Sişman \(2003\)](#) explains that the tales always teach to the children that there exists the bad as well as the good in real life.

6.2.4. *Theme and Content of the Books*

5 out of 32 the participants pointed out that the themes of the books should be educative, draw children’s attention and should be comply with the children’s development stage. In line with these findings, [Gönen \(1993\)](#) supported that the books had lack of power of imagination and were weak in respect of subject and theme, illustrations and physical quality and added that in some books, themes were suitable for elder but picturing was for younger ones. To make the children books more educative it was also suggested that themes should be consistent with the real life; furthermore, they should include elements to improve children’s imagination ([Gönen, 1993](#)).

According to the preschool teachers ‘views [Sahin \(2011\)](#) stated that fairy tales are most important teaching tools to handle for healthy development of the children excluding to meet their love and physiologic needs.

6.3. The participants were required to respond the question of “*What fairy tales do the preschoolers like most?*”

Table-3. The fairy tales the children like most.

Fairy Tales	(f)	(%)
A poor orphan boy tales	9	28.1
Sleeping beauty	8	25.0
Little Red Riding Hood	5	15.6
Nasreddin Hodja	4	12.5
Moral tales	4	12.5
Harmonica players of Bremen	2	6.2
Milk girl	2	6.2
Cinderella	2	6.2
Lead soldier	1	3.1
Rapunzel	1	3.1

Participants stated that the most popular fairy tales among the children are “*A poor orphan boy tales*” with the proportion of % 28,1, “*Sleeping beauty*” with the proportion of % 25,0, and “*Little Red Riding Hood*” with the proportion of % 15,6 respectively [Table 3](#).

6.4. *The participants were required to respond the question of “what behaviors the children acquire via tale telling”*

The participants were of the opinion that children could gain the behaviors including socio-emotional, socio-cultural, moral values by fairy tales at the rate % 18.7 cooperation, % 15 reciprocal respect and love, % 12.5 sharing, % 12 honesty, % 9.3 friendship, % 9.3 collaboration, % 6.3 tolerance, % 6.3 responsibility and awareness, % 3.2 the rules of good manners. There are some similarities between the present study and the study carried out by [Tuğrul and Feyman \(2006\)](#). They examined 192 children picture books with their themes and found 29 different themes comprising % 8.3 sharing & cooperation, % 7.8 environment and nature love, % 7.8 self – confidence and achievement, % 6.8 family relations.

7. CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The literature abounds the contributions of fairy tales to the developments of children's various domains such as cognitive, language, emotional, moral, social, psycho-motor etc. (Kundu and Patra, 1989; Sirin, 2000; Yörükoğlu, 2002; Güteryüz, 2006; Oğuz, 2008; Ulgen, 2008; Arıcı, 2009; Gökşen, 2013). Children are biologically formatted to learn language by born. In addition to this, language is acquired under certain conditions such as social atmosphere in which biological structure of the children; their cognitive system and the cultural environment they live function interrelated. Telling fairy tales is one of the most important contributors of cultural and natural elements (Karatay, 2007) as they are a direct expression of a literary and cultural heritage; through them that heritage is appreciated, understood, and kept alive (Pedersen, 1995). The most important factor affecting language development of children is social environment. The more the verbal stimulus, the richer the language development of the children is (Semerci, 2008; Simşek, 2008; Vural, 2008).

It is widely known that the fairy tales are important masterpieces improving children's language usage skills. They teach the children how to use their mother tongue, show the richness of their mother tongue. It is stated that no literature products can teach to children their mother tongue, all of the characteristics and richness of the language like similes, metaphors, idioms, proverbs, jingles etc except fairy tales. Children who have not known how to read and write can be best benefitted from verbal literature products like telling tales from their elders. The verbal products like jingles, fairy tales, lullabies and stories the children listen to can lead a way them to enjoy using their mother tongue (Vural, 2008; Kabadayı, 2009).

Tales, as a verbal tradition and cultural heritage, is among the most important instructing materials for teaching native language, national and universal values (Karatay, 2007) since they have the potential to become a rich resource for teaching both values and language skills. Furthermore, they embellish children's thoughts, imagination verbally and non-verbally and enhance their sense of beauties.

In fairy tales, it is often seen that ideal people, heroes / heroines who consider humanistic and national values but, do not ignore universal values, respect others freedom, being a self-confident, courageous but not violent, tolerant but struggling against unfairness in a civilized manner, respectful human and nature, has peace, love and democracy culture take place, which supports children to meet desired models in fictitious dimension. In line with this, Yörükoğlu (2002) warns that in the tales, not only should a totally perfect and supernatural hero/ heroines be exaggerated or introduced to the children, but also, a normal person with negative and positive peculiarities should be introduced in order not to make them disappoint in the real life. The children should not become tightly wagged or jammed in the frame of strict moral rules, but they should gain tolerance and elasticity.

In this study, the pre-service teachers classified the fairy tales the children like most as; "A poor orphan boy tales", "Sleeping beauty", "Little Red Riding Hood", "Nasreddin Hodja", "Moral tales", "Harmonica players of Bremen", "Milk girl", "Cinderella", "Lead soldier", "Rapunzel" respectively. Fairy tales and story-books play important role in developing children's cognitive structure, supporting and training various domains in the critical period of early childhood. These folk products widen their horizons, make their life colorful and cause them to be good reader in the future. The folk products help children increase their life experience (Aral, 2008). According to Loukia (2006) children have already formed their schema of what a story is and decoded the letters and sounds until they make sense to them as words and sentences in the family environment since early childhood. At this point, teachers are advised to choose from a wide range of storybooks of this kind: traditional stories and fairy tales which are common in most European cultures (Snow White or Little Red Riding Hood for example); picture stories where children can build up their own version of the story; fantasy stories; animal stories. It is also said that at the ages of both 6 and 9 fairy tales were the most frequently chosen stories for retelling. Among the most popular with 6-year-

olds were *Cinderella* and *Goldilocks*. At nine the most popular choices were *The Three Little Pigs*, *Bed knobs and Broomsticks*, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *The Princes and the Pea*, and *Snow White*. A significant difference between the 6- and 9-year-olds was that the former were far less likely to be able to distinguish between fantasy and reality. They were far more likely to think that *Cinderella* was real or to be certain that they had personally encountered a real giant.

The children are the garden of the fairy tales, and there are pure beauties in their world, purified from the badness. Villains and the evils are always punished and disappeared. The child is the person who knows the language of the love and the garden of the fairy tales. They love the fairy tales because the tales express their feelings best. Therefore, telling tales to the children orally brings about that all the obstacles are abolished and that we feel and live the excitement together with the children (Oğuz, 2008).

The teachers were the opinion of the children could acquire socio-cultural and moral values via tale telling as; cooperation, reciprocal respect and love, sharing, honesty, friendship, collaboration, tolerance, responsibility awareness, the rules of good manners. Sirin (2000) perceives the telling tales as a socializing agent for a child by emphasizing that there is a special place of the tales in the world of the children. Tales are important as they get nearer the children's and parents' worlds, and they get interaction with each other, they qualify the time they shared. In addition to this, the effective messages can easily be given to the children via telling tales. Pedersen (1995) also supports that fairy tales have numerous affective benefits for social and emotional development of children as they build mutual confidence and set relaxed and happy relationship between children and tale teller.

Sirin (2000) emphasizes the contributions of the fairy tales to the mother tongue development of the children. They are the basement that contribute children's recognition their environment, improvement of their tastes and thinking, and demonstration of their skills.

Kundu and Patra (1989) deduced that telling tales is an effective medium to accelerate children's language skills by pointing out that tales are good for teaching languages to children because they like them; they provide ample scope for repetition of words, structures, and dialogues without leading to boredom; they can be profitably used to teach vocabulary, as linking device helps them guess meanings from the context; they also provide sufficient scope for speech practice through role play in a natural way; they can be used to teach basic language skills such as listening, speaking and reading to children from different cultures and different linguistic abilities (41).

In addition to this, Karatay (2007) explains the cognitive contribution of the tale telling to the children by revealing that richness in the fairy tales draws children's attention and contributes acquisition of their cognitive skills. In the preschool period, children acquire listening and understanding, speaking and expressing skills and enrich their vocabulary treasure via tales

It was also emphasized that fairy tales is the richest folk product of all. These common cultural elements should be formed as supporting materials and the contributions in the children's world of thoughts and spirits by using educational science, child psychology and linguistics techniques (Artun, 2008). Furthermore, the use of short-stories in the classroom has always been recommended by the pundits in the field for developing reading comprehension skill as stories offer infinite linguistic as well as personal, socio-cultural, cognitive and emotional benefits for the language learners (Kadiu and Treska, 2016).

In this study, pre-service teachers were of the opinion that telling tales contributed children's various domains like critical and creative thinking, cognitive domain, socio-emotional personal and literacy development. In addition to this, the teachers categorized the story books under the subtitles of use of language, accuracy and fluency, theme & content and pictures.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

Tale telling activities should take more places in preschool syllabus and the parents are supported to raise awareness about tale telling.

The tales the teacher chose should be consistent with children age and development phase. The teacher should use smooth intonation and abstain from exaggeration while telling tale.

The tales told should be dramatized by the preschoolers as they could re-create the tales and have a different view how to solve the problems and learn different ways of solutions.

The preschool teachers should be equipped with the tales the children most like and the techniques of telling tales via in-service training and / or seminars.

The preschool institutions should be enriched by various fairy tale books in order to raise children's awareness to reading.

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