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Social skills in pictured story books

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Abstract

Aim of the research is to examine social skills' levels presenting in story books that are published by different publishers for the children in early childhood education period in Turkey. In the research, document analyze method was used from the qualitative research methods. With this aim, by literature review, social skills categories that are determined by Calderrella and Merrell (1997) were used as an evaluation instrument. Results of the research show that 100 pictured story books from 40 different publishing firms generally focus on certain skills in skills related to peers category but less focus on the skills related to other categories.

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1. Introduction

One of the crucial aims of the Education is to train individuals who have a wide world view, respect to human rights, give importance to personality, feel responsibility to the society, are constructive, creative and productive. In this manner, besides academic achievement of individuals it's expected that their social skills should be strong. There are positive results of learning many social skills in short and long term and also using these skills frequently in suitable manner in early childhood period. Social skills that are gained in this period helps children to overcome the behavioral, emotional (anxiety, self enclose) and cognitive (school failure and school dropping) problems in early years of school. At the same time it provides children to establish positive social relationships with peers, parents and other adults. It is found that social skills which are gained in early years of childhood is related to mental health, emotional and behavioral accommodation and Academic success in following years (Gülay and Akman, 2009).

Teachers need to consider three strategies of learning in teaching social skills to children systematically. First level is to gain skill—skill is introduced to child; second level is fluency —child learns skill and use it easily and last level is enforcing the skill and generalizing — child uses this skill for new situations also in times (Fox and Lentini, 2006). Social skills teaching consists of social modeling, behavioral rehearsal, and behavior transfer (Cartledge & Milburn, 1995). One of the most effective ways for teachers in teaching social skills is to use pictured story books in their class. Cullinan and Galda (1994) point out that children's literature enables children to discover and shape their lives. Kisefer and et al. (2007) state that literature encourages children's imagination and also it ensures that children consider their experiences and opinions about life in a different and new way. Researches indicate that integrating children literature products which includes international themes like self-respect, social perspective, moral reasoning, and moral values to curriculum is considerably effective. When social skill themes are mentioned in children literature, a nonthreatening platform is created by children to discuss their own emotions and ideas

Children will have opportunity to have a different view about events, develop empathy to not only the characters in the book but also other people in real life and think the situations related to their own life (cited in McCabe, Baus, Cartledge & Klarie, 2001).

One of the crucial guides of children in early years is teachers. Bamberger (1990) indicates that teacher has a considerable effect in the first years of school in terms of being an example and a model. It affects the reading development that a child has a teacher who loves reading during this period when the child models the teacher. Srinivasan (1998) states that family can have an effect on the child's reading to a certain extent; however, the teacher has broader opportunities in this issue and adds that teacher's main contribution is seen in choosing attractive and appropriate books for the child (cited in Yılmaz, 2000). Using the qualified books preferred by teachers in story telling activities, children learn some unique and crucial behaviors such as skills related to peers (Appreciating their friends, asking for help when needed, being sensitive to others emotions), self control skills (Controlling anger, accepting others critics, obeying the rules), academics skills (being successful independently, listening and obeying the instructions of teachers), adaptation skills (sharing, fulfilling their responsibilities) and recklessness skills (inviting friends to play together, expressing the emotions, being sure oneself, participating the activities and groups in a suitable manner). Children talk about these skills, share their ideas and make connections with daily life experiences through these activities. In pictured story books researches, beside structural properties of pictured story books their contents are also examined in terms of concept learning, science and mathematics education. Pictured story books provide positive acquisitions to children in social development area as in others. In conclusion; early childhood educators should give place qualified books that support children's social development when they form the book corners in their class According to this idea, the aim of this study is to examine the status of social skills in pictured story books published by different publishing firms that can be easily reached by early childhood educators.

2. Method

Document analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this study, which aimed at examining social skills elements of children's pictured story books published in the last 16 years and particularly used by early childhood education centers. Accordingly, 100 children's books, published between 1995 and 2011, which include social skills, were examined. The children's books used by early childhood education centers, and declared suitable for preschool children were selected by the researchers for examination and included in the scope of the study.

2.1 Procedures

According to the aim of the study, social skills categories in literature, determined by Calderalla ve Merrell (1997) were used. The status of social skills that takes part in pictured story books was examined by researchers. Calderalla ve Merrell (1997) categorized social skills in five dimensions. These are skills related to peers, skills related to self-control, cognitive skills, recklessness skills and adaptation skills.

2.2 Data Analysis

The items in these categories were examined in 100 pictured story books by the researchers. In this period firstly a few books were read by all researchers and a common attitude was provided for the reading process.

3. Findings and Conclusion

In this part of research, the status of social skills in pictured story books that can be used by early childhood educators in story telling activities take place. The common property of forty publishing firms that are examined in this study is to publish books for 2-12 years old children. The researchers could provide totally 100 books (between 2 and 10 books from each publishing firm). Findings related to status of social skills in pictured story books that can be used in story telling activities are given Table 2. It is found that almost all of the story books include at least one social skill in five categories that are considered in this study.

Table 2. Status of Social Skills That Take Part in Pictured Story Books

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Skills Related to Peers	
Appraisal the friends	9
Asking for help when needed	20
Providing help to the friends when needed	28
Talking to friends and participating in the discussions	14
Defending the right of the friends	1
Being sensitive to the emotions of the friends	19
Taking the leadership role in activities carried out with peers	8
Making friendship easily	15
Having the feeling of humor	1
Skills Related to Self-control	
Having the ability of control	1
Being calm when the problem occurs	16
Observance of the rules	9
Accepting own limits	14
Negotiation with others in suitable situations	8
Getting positive criticism	6
Accepting the criticizes of others	12
Cognitive Skills	
Working independently	11
Achieving the duties independently	9
Listening corresponding to the directions of teacher	3
Using the free times in a suitable manner	5
Asking for help suitably when needed	7
Recklessness Skills	
Make an attempt to talk to others	14
Inviting friends to play together	12
Making good things for oneself	21
Saying good things for oneself	5
Being sure oneself	12
Asking for the rules that are unoccustoment	3
Meeting oneself to new people	7
Feeling relax to opposite gender	1
Expressing the emotions	42
Participating the activities and groups in a suitable manner	16
Adaptation Skills	
Adapting the directions	13
Following the rules	11
Sharing the materials, toys and other things that are belongs to oneself	12
Completing homework	2
Carrying out the responsibilities	10
Reflecting suitably to the positive criticizes	8

Table 2 indicates that the books focus on skills related to peers the most in five social skills categories. When the subtitles of the categories are examined, it is seen that the skills such as defending the right of the friends, completing homework, feeling relax to opposite gender, asking for the rules that are unoccustoment, using the free times in a suitable manner, listening corresponding to the directions of teacher, having the ability of control and having the feeling of humor take place rarely.

Using the free times in a suitable manner skill takes place in *Kültürlü Kurt* pictured story book (p 17) “*Kültürlü Kurt will read its book day and night, its each letter and its each line*”. In pictures story book called *Yatağın Altındaki Harfler*; it is told that the main character likes playing too much, watching tv and travelling but dislike reading or studying. The following part of the story focuses attracting the children’s attention on reading. Social skills in pictured story books are mostly related to asking for help when needed, providing help to the friends when needed, being sensitive to the emotions of the friends, making good things for oneself and expressing the emotions. These skills take place in pictured story books like: *Özgür Uğur Böceği*, (p.14) “*Sparrow stretched out a branch to release the Ladybird beetle. Ladybug beetle thrilled when he goes outside from the pit*” (providing help to

the friends when needed) *Yalnız Menekşe*, (p.13): “Brother Stork! I got bored here, could you please take me to the garden where my friends are?” (Asking for help when needed), *Yalnız Menekşe*, (p.14): “Stork was very sad about viola. He separated it from soil by his pantograph without damaging its roots and took him away to the garden where its friends are”. *İki Kavgaçı Ağaç*, (p 13): “A bird that saw that the trees did not fight any more came into a branch. Hello!. Why are you so sad?” (Being sensitive to the emotions of the friends), *Kırmızı Fili Gördünüz mü* (p14): “I hugged the elephant and kissed his trunk. I told that I love him very much”. *Ninem Örgü Örüyor*, (p 1): “I was very curious about what she is knitting?” (p5): “Age- Grammy! You are the one!” (Expressing the emotions), “Our sweaters are very nice, thanks for your effort. The ski is ready. Let's go to the skiing, have fun of snowing.” (Making good things for oneself). Appraisal the friends’ skill, one of the peer related skills, takes place in *Kıskanç Papatya* story in such way (p6): “You’re a special flower. You don’t look like wildflower”. In *İki Kavgaçı Ağaç* story, making friendship easily skill was taken in the part that mentions about the friendship of birds, trees and worm, in *Kitap Perisi* story, the fairy makes friends from different countries in each book she visits, in *Uyumak İstemeyen Zürafa* story it was taken in the part that mentions about the friendship of bird, rabbit and camelopard, in *Bütün Gün Esneyen Prenses* story, princess’s yawning stops when she finds herself a playmate, in *Eski Oyuncaklar* story first toy clown and toy bear make friends and then all old toys make friends and have fun. Being calm when the problem occurs skill, which is one of the skills in skills related to self control category, was taken in *Süslü Fare* story such a way (p 14): “Süslü Fare took off her shoes and clothes quickly in consternation of othersshe made a well supported raft. ... Come on! Young people should get on the raft first. Hurry up! The fire comes near”. Listening corresponding to the directions of teacher skill takes place in *Ptır Arıcık* story (p 3): “New bees joined in the beehive this year. Little bees were so exciting. Queen Bee told them what they must do..... She told that all of them must follow up the guide bee...” In *Özgür Uğur Böceği* and *Kendini Beğenmiş Kurbağa* stories, inviting friends to play together and making an attempt to talk to others in recklessness skills take place in such way (p.7, p.11): *Özgür Uğur Böceği*, ‘Hello, brother ant! I am bored very much. I am looking for someone to play. Can you play with me?’. *Kendini Beğenmiş Kurbağa*: ‘Brother Fish, do you want me to sing a song? My voice is very beautiful. You will love it’. Lastly, when the categories are examined, reflecting suitably to the positive criticizes in adaptation skills takes place in *Kendini Beğenmiş Kurbağa* (p.13) in such way: ‘He had understood his mistake. He decided to go back. He should have found his friends. He strolled around the lake.

4. Results and Suggestions

The findings that are acquired from the research results, pictured story books that can be easily reached by the early childhood educators generally concentrate on specific skills in terms of social skills. It is suggested that teachers and parents should use pictured story books published by different publishing firms which are focus on some special social skills not only expressing their emotions and providing help to the friends when needed but also defending the right of the friends, having the feeling of humor and saying good things for one self. It is seen that social skills discussed in the pictured story books pass around generally the same issue not but about different perspectives. This situation shows that when the social skills are taught to the children, it is a fault that there is only way or only one example to teach it. It is suggested to the teachers that they should choose the books that get to the children skills of life-wide thinking and using learned skills in daily life. During teacher-child and child-child interaction, when social skill teaching in early childhood education centers are discussed in an unstructured period in classroom environment, like drama and storytelling activities can be used to enable children to gain such peer relation skills; appraisal the friends, being sensitive to the emotions of the friends, asking for help when needed and providing help to the friends when needed, such self control skills; being calm when the problem occurs, observance of the rules and accepting the criticizes of others, such cognitive skills; working independently and using the free times in a suitable manner, such recklessness skills; inviting friends to play together and being sure oneself.

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