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Assessment of Turkish and class teacher candidates' attitudes towards children's literature and children's literature lesson

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Abstract

Purpose of this research is to reveal class and Turkish teacher candidates' attitudes towards children's literature lesson, and works of children's literature. Study group of this research is comprised of students from Classroom Teaching and Turkish Teaching Departments of Faculty of Education of Atatürk University. Answers were sought for the level of classroom teaching and pre-school teacher candidates' towards children's literature lesson, and works of children's literature, and whether there is any significant difference is seen in classroom teaching and pre-school teacher candidates' towards children's literature lesson, and works of children's literature in terms gender, and departments. Having the research conducted according to survey method (2007), "Attitude Scale towards Children's Literature, and Children's Literature Lesson", having been developed by ..., and comprised of 35 articles, was made use of. At the end of the research, it was concluded that teacher candidates had developed a positive attitude towards children's literature, and children's literature lesson, and neither gender, nor field differences had significantly affected that attitude.

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1. Introduction

Naming of children's literature in the meantime brings to mind a special field, and its respective studies and applications, on the other hand brings forth an othering emphasis. Such a naming in a vast and profound field, called "literature", reveals the possibility, or necessity of the existence of a children's literature therein, alongside that of adult's.

Humanity has got steps of development on psychological, sociological, cognitive, emotional, physical, and lingual bases. While each step is the preliminary of the next, it also fulfills a quite significant function in this chaining in its own axis. In this direction, for a better understanding, and internalization of the literature currently being addressed to adults, importance of intellectual, emotional, and lingual development throughout the childhood period comes in view as a matter of course.

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Differences being shown by children from specific age groups in skill and competence of using language in particular under the title of children’s literature unveil the necessity of a special field concerning itself with this subject matter, namely children’s literature. “While children of mankind, having common traits, disregarding their races, colors, social living environments, natural conditions, also reveal a number of common features in developing their languages” (Ilhan, 2005: 155), the most important factor, revealing the difference in using and developing language among children within the same age groups, is the level of functionality of children’s literature.

Differences in the levels of understanding of children in specific age groups also necessitate the differences in the literary sources they come across. “Daniel L. Russel classifies the different understanding and perception characteristics of children from various age groups, and the features of the literary works they may show interest consequently in his work ‘Literature for Children, a Short Introduction’ as follows:” (Fedai, 2007: 47)

Chart 1. Child Development

Children between the ages of 0-2	Able to perceive concrete elements and objects
Children between the ages of 2-7	Subjective logic is at the forefront
Children between the ages of 7-11	Living in the period of immature logic, and problem-solving period
Children between the ages of 11-15	Interested in real subjects and events. Therefore, works being written for this age group are mostly on social subjects, and true stories.

This classification of Russel is of quality of a pattern of the opinion, having been tried to be emphasized throughout the study. The chart 1 above reveals the fact that a Turkish student from the 1st stage of primary education without a settled logic, may not be presented with classical Turkish poems, such as “Kaldırımlar”, or “Merdiven”, or a text, included with abstract expressions most may not be presented to a child, having not left his/her concrete operational stage.

Having been aware of in particular at Tanzimat Reform Era, importance of children’s literature in Turkey has been recognized even better as from the constitution of the Republic. Having become multiplied as from Tanzimat Reform Era, publications addressing children have continued to increase as from the constitution of the Republic. “However, during the period between Tanzimat Reform Era and Republican Era, importance being given to children’s literature evolved. While only importance of publishing to children was emphasized during Tanzimat Reform Era, after the constitution of the Republic, emphases on the children’s literature concept, researches in academic terms on the educational aspect of children’s literature, and writing of number of theoretical and academic books in this context were altogether embarked upon.” (Büyükkavas Kuran ve Ersözü, 20009: 2).

Critical studies are to be made on children’s literature in Turkey. Because, “having publications in children’s literature depended mostly on translated books is utterly unfavorable, for such a situation is deemed to be making way for cultural imperialism” (Baykurt, 1977: 91). Attractive aspects of such literary genres, as drama, tales, poems, stories, etc., enjoying to be listened to by children, are to be singled out. By coming to know these cultural riches, being taken from the past, and almost spontaneously having established the children’s education system, these literary genres may be enriched in the future, and be presented to children in a more integral, and systematical way. By means of such works, as being culturally functional in terms of culture, children may not only become acquainted with the society they are living in, but also make quite a progress in lingual, emotional, and cognitive levels.

Tales, stories, and dramas play an important role in the process of children’s attaining the literary and cultural background of the society they are living in. These kinds of literary works are particularly important for the children, having reached their adolescence, and to go on living thereafter by having the world and objects imaged continuously. One of the best example of these are Kelođlan tales. Kelođlan tales are important for incorporating an important archetype in life, namely the stage. In these tales, Kelođlan leaves his house, encounter a number of

difficulties, and turns back to his village with a gain. This archetype, being embodied by Kelođlan, is to function as an important psychological, and lingual preliminary mechanism for a child to have/to become apart from his/her mother, and to have stepped/to step in a totally different environment, namely school (Dökmen, 1983: 386). Children apply to conceptualization in the process of perceiving and learning.

In this context, having images' quality of reminiscing concepts taken into consideration, presentation of dramas, novels, and stories to children suitable for their level of perception, in a careful way by keeping away from images to negatively affect their spiritual world, such as "genie, angel, bogey", is to contribute greatly to the children's future skills of interpretation, comparison, and determination (Öçalan, 2006: 5). Having the fact that literary texts are based on images also taken into consideration, children will benefit greatly in encountering the probable difficulties they may face in the future by having them introduced to images gradually.

Written and verbal works addressing to the children are to be thoroughly examined by the experts of the subject matter. Discourses, even ideologies are to be carefully reviewed, especially those of storytellers and writers (Poveda, Morgade and Alonso, 2009: 245). Because the works deriving from their tongues or pens, are to address to the children, having a quite sensitive emotional world.

There are undeniable effects of the works of children's literature on the development of child EI (emotional intelligence). For literary texts being emotional texts, incorporating various emotions, children's encounter with these emotions is to cause them becoming aware of their own emotions as well. "Persons, knowing their own emotions, are aware of their states of mind, they may take healthier decisions on issues, requiring personal decision-taking, they may act more autonomously, they are sure of their limits, and they may see the from a positive point of view" (Tuğrul, 1999: 15). The process of reintroducing such self-assured individuals to the society requires the cooperation of teachers in the school, and that of teachers and parents out of the school, on the issue of introducing children's literature works to the children.

Children's worlds of dreams are quite colorful. This condition may very well be converted into an opportunity in terms of children's literature. In this context, importance of any material to lead children to daydreaming, and to lead them verbally expressing these intellectual imaginations, is equally undeniable. Picture books, addressing to the dream worlds of children, are among such important genres, helping children let off their stresses by allowing them to travel in their dream worlds. Mitchell describes this issue by stating that, what matter therein is not age, but touches of those pictures to our souls, and thereby bringing us to our childhood days (Jalango, 2004: 6).

Children come to schools in a way aware of the certain structures of language. Future developments thereto may be encouraged by means of literary uses, to have been planned for children. Teacher's exchanging of books with students at the classroom, and his/her planning of activities to increase the speaking and writing skills of students, are to be among the factors increasing the level of functionality of children's literature (Cullian & Carmichael, 1977: 82). At this point, teacher's awareness of the importance of children's literature is equally important.

Works of children's literature have a vital importance on the lingual development of children. By means of these works, children are not only to come across new words, but also to gain the opportunity of reusing the words they have previously learned, so as to have them engraved in their memories. In this view, the more children are to read literary texts, the more their vocabularies are to gain dynamism, and the higher their levels of thinking and interpretation are to elevate. From a study that Pilancı (2009) has conducted in between the years 2006-2009 in two schools in Eskişehir with different socio-economical values, it has been ascertained that a 9-year-old student could have used 50% of 3473 words he/she came by throughout the said period, and the other half was saved in his/her memory, without putting into use, as a critical fact, revealing not only the importance of children's literature, but also lack of sensitivity of both teachers, and families in this respect.

Within the scope of children's literature, children are to be introduced with not only the native resources, but also with the respective distinguished examples from world literature. Children may thereby be assisted in developing a consciousness from various times and cultures towards past (Cox & Hughes, 1988: 88).

As being mentioned in the publicity writ of Wright's work, titled "Storytelling with Children" (2003), stories and tales assume a stimulant function in writing and reading, developing lingual consciousness in children, as well as such roles of elevating the level of success in communication, and supporting the competences of children like awareness, analyzing and expression. Again in this respect, Barton's work, titled "Telling Stories Your Way:

Storytelling and Reading Aloud in the Classroom” (2000), includes valuable information on how to develop a tale or story for the children, and to have a much better use of such tales and stories in the lingual development of children.

There are so many things to say of the necessities and benefits of children’s literature. However, what is critical at this point is to render children’s literature education in the faculties of education in a “contemporary learning teaching perception, in which theoretical propositions are being tested, and concretized” (Sever, 2007: 55). Professional knowledge may only be brought in the teacher candidates by means of such a working method.

2. Purpose of Research

Purpose of this research is to put forth the attitudes of classroom, and Turkish teacher candidates towards children’s literature lesson, and works of children’s literature.

For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought for:

1-What is the level of classroom, and Turkish teacher candidates towards children’s literature lesson, and works of children’s literature?

2-Do the attitudes of classroom, and Turkish teacher candidates towards children’s literature lesson, and works of children’s literature reveals a meaningful difference as per their genders?

3- Do the attitudes of classroom, and Turkish teacher candidates towards children’s literature lesson, and works of children’s literature reveals a meaningful difference as per their departments?

3. Method

Research was structured by means of survey method, intended for describing an existing situation in its existing condition.

3.1. Data Collection Means

“Attitude Scale towards Children’s Literature, and Children’s Literature Lesson”, having been developed by Bağcı (2007), and comprised of 35 articles, was used as the means of data collection means. There are 35 articles in the scale, having been developed by Bağcı (2007), 13 of which are negative and remaining 22 being positive. The points to be gained from Likert-type scale range from the lowest 0 to highest 140, in which there are options of “Fully agreeing”, “Agreeing”, “Undecided”, “Disagreeing”, “Far from agreeing”. Positive articles are pointed in 4 to 0, respectively in the order of “Fully agreeing”, “Agreeing”, “Undecided”, “Disagreeing”, “Far from agreeing”, and the negative ones being pointed in the opposite direction. Level of reliability (Cronbach alfa) of the scale in the sample being researched was found as .81.

3.2. Study Group

Study group of this research is comprised of students from Classroom Teaching and Turkish Teaching Departments of Faculty of Education of Atatürk University. Distribution of the study group as per the class levels, and genders of the students therein is as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Distribution of Teacher Candidates according to sex and section

Gender	N
Female	102
Male	145
Department	N
Classroom Teach.	119
Turkish Teach.	128

4. Findings

1-What is the level of the attitudes of classroom, and pre-school teacher candidates towards children's literature lesson, and towards the works of children's literature?

Table 2. Attitude Scale Articles

ATTITUDE SCALE ARTICLES	Far from agreeing		Disagreeing		Undecided		Agreeing		Fully agreeing	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
	1. I love Children's Literature lesson.	11	4.5	20	8.1	28	11.3	91	36.8	97
2. Children's Literature lesson does not seem joyful-attractive to me.	81	32.8	84	34.0	39	15.8	29	11.7	13	5.3
3. Children's Literature lesson is of an important and essential quality for a teacher candidate to serve in the primary education	17	6.9	20	8.1	23	9.3	65	26.3	122	49.4
4. Taking the course of Children's Literature is a waste of time for a teacher candidate to serve in the primary education level of Children's Literature lesson.	120	48.6	81	32.8	19	7.7	14	5.7	13	5.3
5. Children's Literature is a boring lesson.	99	40.1	81	32.8	33	13.4	23	9.3	11	4.5
6. I would not take Children's Literature lesson if it is not obligatory.	84	34.0	79	32.0	40	16.2	31	12.6	13	5.3
7. I do not enjoy attending to Children's Literature lesson.	86	34.8	95	38.5	31	12.6	26	10.5	9	3.6
8. I would take another lesson in place of Children's Literature lesson if possible.	78	31.6	94	38.1	38	15.4	28	11.3	9	3.6
9. I think that weekly course hours of Children's Literature lesson are insufficient.	24	9.7	63	25.5	78	31.6	50	20.2	32	13.0
10. I would like to see Children's Literature lesson be given more comprehensively also in other classes.	21	8.5	50	20.2	72	29.1	61	24.7	43	17.4
11. I enjoy attending group works in Children's Literature.	17	6.9	29	11.7	52	21.1	83	33.6	66	26.7

12. Books and magazines about Children's Literature attract my attention.	9	3.6	54	21.9	55	22.3	91	36.8	38	15.4
13. I enjoy dealing with works of Children's Literature in my spare times.	16	6.5	66	26.7	62	25.1	73	29.6	30	12.1
14. I enjoy being present at environments of discussion in Children, and their literature.	19	7.7	53	21.5	82	33.2	60	24.3	33	13.4
15. I try to follow up researches and works being conducted in Children's Literature.	20	8.1	78	31.6	71	28.7	59	23.9	19	7.7
16. Dealing with issues about Children's Literature bores me.	57	23.1	85	34.4	58	23.5	37	15.0	10	4.0
17. I enjoy following the programs within the scope of Children's Literature in the mass media.	14	5.7	45	18.2	70	28.3	82	33.2	36	14.6
18. I attentively follow Children's Theatre programs.	18	7.3	53	21.5	68	27.5	77	31.2	31	12.6
19. I joyfully read native and foreign Children's Literature classics.	17	6.9	54	21.9	53	21.5	79	32.0	44	17.8
20. Works of Children's Literature do not attract my attention.	56	22.7	83	33.6	55	22.3	43	17.4	10	4.0
21. I study Children's Literature lesson only for passing my class.	69	27.9	77	31.2	43	17.4	37	15.0	21	8.5
22. I study Children's Literature lesson more fondly in comparison to other lessons.	16	6.5	60	24.3	63	25.5	73	29.6	35	14.2
23. I like studying Children's Literature lesson.	18	7.3	52	21.1	41	16.6	86	34.8	50	20.2
24. Each new subject I come to know in Children's Literature lesson elevates my self-confidence.	19	7.7	48	19.4	50	20.2	79	32.0	51	20.6
25. I feel scared and excited before Children's Literature examination.	64	25.9	66	25.9	66	26.7	28	11.3	25	10.1
26. Dealing with texts of Children's Literature contributes to my better understanding of child spirit and psychology.	21	8.5	26	10.5	28	11.3	85	34.4	87	35.2
27. What I learn at Children's Literature lesson will be quite helpful in my professional life.	11	4.5	22	8.9	27	10.9	79	32.0	108	43.7
28. I think that, I may benefit from what I learn at Children's Literature lesson also in my daily life.	14	5.7	28	11.3	38	15.4	78	31.6	89	36.0
29. I will need Children's Literature lesson in my future studies.	10	4.0	29	11.7	41	16.6	64	25.9	103	41.7
30. Teacher's attitudes and performance in the classroom is effective in taking Children's Literature lesson joyfully.	10	4.0	18	7.3	26	10.5	77	31.2	116	47.0

31. Teacher is the one responsible from boring course of Children's Literature lesson.	42	17.0	31	12.6	63	25.5	40	16.2	71	28.7
32. It will be beneficial to have works of Children's Literature included in the course books within suitable levels.	15	6.1	15	6.1	32	13.0	91	36.8	94	38.1
33. I think that studies in Children's Literature are insufficient in our country.	21	8.5	25	10.1	55	22.3	74	30.0	72	29.1
34. I believe that having the works of writers and poems of Children's Literature reviewed in lessons will be more beneficial	11	4.5	33	13.4	56	22.7	75	30.4	72	29.1
35. Children's Literature lesson has developed a positive attitude among us towards these lessons.	14	5.7	31	12.6	41	16.6	73	29.6	88	35.6

Comments on a number of positive and negative articles of the attitude scale:

Having the positive attitude articles in Table 2 reviewed; the articles to which students delivered positive opinions at the highest rate are 1st, and 3rd articles. 1st article, as being "1. I love Children's Literature lesson" was responded positively by 76% of the students. The rate of the ones not agreeing thereto is around 12.6%. In accordance with these results, it may well be said that, a significant majority of teacher candidates do love Children's Literature lesson.

3rd article, as being "Children's Literature is an important, and essential lesson for the teacher candidates to serve in the primary education level" was responded positively again by a rate of 76%. Students' confidence in the necessity of the lesson is such a critical condition, in terms of developing a positive attitude towards the lesson. The rate of the ones not agreeing thereto is also around the rate of 15%. Despite the rate of agreeing to this article, the negative rate of 15% is not to be underestimated.

Having 27th article reviewed, it will be seen that, the rate of Turkish teacher candidates "believing in the things they have learned in children's literature lesson are to be quite helpful in the rest of their professional lives" is 75.7%. This is a situation in parallel with 3rd article.

The article with the second highest positive response is 32nd article. 75% of Turkish teacher candidates are seen to deliver positive attitude towards the opinion that, "Inclusion of works of children's literature into course books in suitable levels is to be beneficial". 12% of the students are seen not to agree with this opinion. Literary works' contributions in numerous fields from lingual development to skills of expression have been evidenced by means of respectively conducted researches.

While 47% of the students agree with 30th attitude article of "teacher's attitudes and performance through the lesson is effective in the joyful course of children's literature lessons", rate of the ones disagreeing with that by delivering negative opinion is around 11.3%. This situation may be interpreted as the content of the lesson is sufficiently attractive, without requiring an additional performance of the teacher.

Students delivered positive response by a rate of 70% to the statement in 26th article that, "Dealing with works of children's literature is beneficial in familiarizing with child spirit and psychology". This situation brings into mind the opinion that, developmental psychology may be internalized significantly by means of the works of children's literature.

Having 27th article reviewed, it will be seen that, the rate of Turkish teacher candidates "believing in the things they have learned in children's literature lesson are to be quite helpful in the rest of their professional lives" is 75.7%. Taking the pointing of this article into consideration, it may be possible to state that, teacher candidates do believe in the essence of vitality of the children's literature lesson.

Again in terms of Table 2, having the negative attitude articles reviewed; 81% of Turkish teacher candidates stated that, "taking the course of children's literature is not a waste of time for a Turkish teacher candidate", by delivering a positive opinion towards 4th article. This is a significant figure in % in the current attitude scale. Again in parallel with this, they "disagreed" with the opinion in 5th article, that "children's literature is a boring lesson" by

a rate of 70%. According to this result, a significant majority of the teacher candidates do enjoy children's literature lesson. Such a condition is significantly in parallel with 30th, 6th, and 7th articles.

While around half of the students disagree with 25th article of "the ones feeling neither scared, nor excited before children's literature examination", 25% of the rest remained undecided. This situation may be interpreted as the examinations are to be prepared in an activity-based way, and lowering the level of anxiety.

2-Do the attitudes of classroom, and Turkish teacher candidates towards children's literature lesson, and works of children's literature reveals a meaningful difference as per their genders?

Table 3. Gender Distribution

Gender	N	X	S	Sd	t	p
Female	102	2,18	,37	245	.778	.437
Male	145	2,14	,37			

Attitudes of teacher candidates towards children's literature lesson, and children's literature do not reveal a meaningful difference as per their genders [$t(245) = .778, p > .05$] As being seen from the respective Table 3, there is not any significant difference between female and male teacher candidates in terms of their attitudes towards children's literature lesson, and children's literature. However, the attitude average of female teacher candidates with regard to children's literature lesson, and children's literature (2.18) is higher than that of male candidates (2.14).

3-Do the attitudes of classroom, and Turkish teacher candidates towards children's literature lesson, and works of children's literature reveals a meaningful difference as per their departments?

Table 4. Department Distribution

Department	N	X	S	Sd	t	p
Classroom	119	2,13	,38	245	,941	,348
Teach..						
Turkish Teach.	128	2,187500	,36			

Attitudes of teacher candidates towards children's literature lesson, and works of children's literature do not reveal a meaningful difference as per their departments [$t(245) = 0.941, p > .05$] However, the attitude average of Turkish teacher candidates with regard to children's literature lesson, and children's literature ($X=2.18$) is higher than that of classroom teacher candidates ($X=2.13$). This difference, ascertained in between the two educational types, is not deemed meaningful in terms of statistics.

5. DISCUSSION

Children's literature, and works belonging thereto positively affect primary education students particularly in terms of language, and fields of lingual development. They assume a stimulant function in writing and reading, developing lingual consciousness in children, as well as such roles of elevating the level of success in communication, and supporting the competences of children like awareness, analyzing and expression.

At a time in which children are prone to computer, and computer games, such disadvantages as solitude psychology, selfishness, and not being open-hearted comes to the fore accordingly. Alongside their dimensions positively affecting overall lingual development, works of children's literature also reveal themselves as an important argument, in terms of their providing social and psychological awareness, and coherence. It cannot be said that, the studies having been conducted with regard to the significance of the subject matter are sufficient. Children's literature, and works thereof may also provide significant advantages in terms of building a solid bridge with the past, so as to transmit the ethically, socially, and culturally positive values of the past to present.

In order to achieve the abovementioned significant advantages may only be possible by teachers'/teacher candidates' developing a positive attitude towards children's literature, and works thereof. The results of the research are significantly in parallel with those having been derived from the ones conducted in the same subject matter." (Büyükkavas Kuran & Ersözü, 2009) (Bağcı, 2007).

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