

The Assessment of Contribution of Tales to Children's Education and Lack of Instructive Elements

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Abstract: Tales are anonymous works that are narrative and instructive, and contribute to children's development of language and imaginary world. It would be wrong to look for an exact source to examine tales because they have the features of the geography and characteristics of the society in which they are told. Researchers have long emphasized that tales have an important place in children's education. Tales are beneficial for children's language, socio-cultural, cognitive and psychological development. However, some researchers argue that the distinctive icons of tales between bad and good negatively affect children's development in these areas. This study focuses on the contribution of tales to children's language, socio-cultural, cognitive and psychological development, and also the lack of instructive elements in tales.

Keywords: Tales, Children's Education, Lack of Instructive Elements, Mother Tongue.

1. Introduction

Tales are a type of prose that are verbally narrated by mothers starting from the first moments of infancy, liked and listened to with great pleasure by people from all age groups. Events in a tale are staged in an imaginary place in an unknown time period. The characters can be a human, animal and supernatural creature. Tales are instructive as well as enjoyable. They try to tell the truth with unique symbols and different expressions. They mostly focus on the relationship between good and bad, and have a happy ending.

Tales can be defined as stories that are created by people, passed on verbally from one generation to another, and are about supernatural events of people and gods (TLI, 1998). Tales are the form of freedom and desire of infiniteness in our inner worlds (Efe, 2005). That is why tales are the most realistic aspect of life. Human beings have narrated their own reality of life, solutions and expectations by reflecting these on events and characters in tales, and for centuries, have tried to warn, educate and equip future generations for the difficulties of life through tales. This is because a parallelism can be established between almost every problem that a hero encounters and realities of life, and the reality of a society can be reached by means of its tales (Arici, 2009). Tales are like a magical world free from imaginary limits. Therefore, children love reading and being read tales, and especially asking others to tell them tales. In fact, they find their own worlds in tales. Witches, ill-hearted step mothers, wild animals and huge castles are indispensable parts of many children's tales. Accordingly, it can be referred that tales are essential learning material in spite of scary elements.

This article is the product of a qualitative study. It aims to explain the contribution of tales to children's education in cognitive, cultural, language-related, psychological and social aspects, and the lack of instructive elements in tales.

2. Contribution of Tales to Children's Education

Tales have unique characteristics compared to other literary genres in terms of their contents and style of expression. In the society, there is a common belief that tales are for preschool children. They are accepted as imaginary and verbal literary works that make them spend enjoyable time and are adorned with supernatural events. The importance of telling and listening to tales in the education of children, young individuals and the public has been realised as early as the 1400's.

Place, time and people being unknown or supernatural and the dominance of imagination in tales have been seen as harmful for those who object to the use of tales in education. On the other hand, some researchers argue that imagination is a symbol of the superiority of human mind, not its defect. [Onal and Dursun \(2009\)](#) refer that tales are a genre that is closely related to the reality of life, sometimes challenges and develops the imagination of the listener or reader, tells mostly about action and events rather than details, and are passed on in this way, because of being one of the most important texts of expression for the history of human beings.

Tale is shown as a resource that many disciplines can use in researches, especially in social science researches. For instance, cultural characteristics of nations are embedded in tales. For this reason, tales are valuable pieces of documents for describing the establishment and main elements of the society, and examining the basics of the folk culture ([Gunes A. and Yakici, 2005](#)). In addition to being a literary genre carrying the cultural elements of a society best, tales also convey the language as an important symbol of a nation's identity.

Having a significant place in social life, language plays a crucial role in business, cultural and political relationships. It has a particular importance in foreign language education, which is of significance in the framework of education policies for developing countries. This is because societies cannot stand by themselves. To be in the process of existence, they have to interact with other societies. The importance attached to learning a foreign language is increasing every other day to enable this interaction. Because a language cannot be considered independent from the culture of the society in which it is spoken, learners are necessarily surrounded by the culture of that target language speaking country. Since the first day of human existence, societies have imprinted their cultural and language-related elements on tales and conveyed them for generations. This study aimed to explain the contribution of tales to children's cognitive, social, cultural, psychological and language development.

2.1. Contribution of Tales to Children's Language Development

There is no doubt that language is the most important tool that prepares individuals to the process of socialization. In general, language is the body of voiced or written signals that are unique to a society in which individuals express their feelings and thoughts when they come together through sometimes speaking or gestures and mimics.

The language development of children is of importance not only for families, but also for societies. Tales are among the most important literary works that adorn children's imaginary world and enable them to express themselves. The literary genre that children encounter first is tales. Based on narration and having a unique sense, tales are accepted as the most significant source of children's literature in all cultures. Tales are not real, but products of imagination. [Propp \(2001\)](#) indicates that reality is indirectly reflected on tales. Children travel from imagination to reality through tales, and concretises the reality by comparing with dreams. Thus, they can coexist with the world of their dreams ([Yalcin, 2003](#)).

Children develop their speaking skills to the highest level by means of tales. Enhancing the impression of words depends on appropriately using elements such as intonation, emphasis and pauses. In addition, it is important to use interjections, adjectives and adverbs in the right places. Tales are the genre in which these practices are experienced vividly ([Goksen, 2009](#)). In other words, it is the tales that first teach children that their mother tongue is used as a tool in a craftsman's hands, show them the flexibility, richness and fluency of this language, arouse the feeling that makes them closer to those who speak the same language, and instil cradle-songs, tongue twisters and folk songs in them ([Boratav, 1992](#)).

Every society conveys its culture to new generations through language. While performing this function, it makes use of various products of the folk literature. One of these is tales. While teaching the pronunciation, vocabulary, rhetoric and discourse expressions, tales also ensure social communication. Tales have significant contributions to effectively teaching language in mother tongue education. This is because vocabulary, idioms, lexical bundles, aesthetics and proverbs of a language can be presented with such products of the folk literature. Besides, development can be observed in children's skill of expressing themselves depending on their development in vocabulary. Presenting an aesthetic form of literature, these rich works also develop comprehension and expression skills. To be able to contribute to children's language development, tales should be categorised, organised and used in accordance with the intended purpose for which language specialists and educators should carry out collaborative studies.

2.2. Contribution of Tales to Children's Cultural and Social Development

Mother tongue is an important tool in children's development in the early childhood period, formation of their personality, enhancing their knowledge and skills, and their adaptation to the society

they live in. Naming, perceiving and recognizing events for the first time occur in their mother tongue. Children's speaking their mother tongue plays important roles in their development of mental processes such as perception, reasoning and problem solving (Aytemiz, 2000). Attendantly, mother tongue also has an important place in children's development of speaking ability.

Individuals can best express their feelings and thoughts in the language they speak. Similarly, children can best express their feelings and thoughts in their mother tongue. Children acquire the first social rules, cultural and social values through language (Piyade, 1990). Children need language to express themselves, gain social and cultural values, and meet their communication needs (Mussen *et al.*, 1990). Cultural values should be conveyed from generation to generation through language. This conveyance can only be achieved in a socially interactive environment. Language enables forming such an environment and conveying cultural values. Children are in a constant interaction with the cultural stimuli to which they are born. For example, every family has its rules and habits based on its own cultural background and value judgements. These can be house rules, eating habits and clothing habits. Children will learn their social values through social interactions in the family environment, and feel that they are members of that family, and thus, the society. In this way, children go through their first socialisation process in the family. Everything they learn in other social environments will be established on this basis and develop further.

Socialisation in the early childhood period is extremely important for children's personality and self-development. This is because a healthy interaction with children in the early childhood period will form the basis for gaining a healthy self. Those who develop a healthy personality and self will not have difficulty in adapting to the society they live in. If children develop a value judgement and perspective that appreciate their own social values, their self-respect will not be damaged. Mother tongue is also an important factor in developing a healthy personality and self.

The effect of tales on children's social and cultural development cannot be denied. Even before learning how to read and write, children can learn the principles and values of democratic way of life, which are showing respect to others' rights and different views, being helpful, sharing, electing administrators, making decisions about themselves, self-confidence, coping with difficulties, following instructions, love, friendship, doing good, and being honest, through tales. These values also enable them to socialise. Children, who socialise and learn the principle of democratic life, become ready to the situations that they will encounter in the future. Kuzu (2008) explains this situation as follows: "The sooner they learn these principles, the shorter their processes of adaptation to modern life would be".

A tale hero is one of the most concrete examples of children in their own world, and has feelings, views and behaviours that are not contradictory to social norms. Children realise what feelings, views and behaviours are accepted or approved from the emphasis, intonation, gesture and mimics of the narrator, and the reactions of the listeners. In this way, they take the personality of the tale hero as a model, adopt their behaviours and act like them when necessary. Thereby, they show the determination and effort to overcome the difficulties they encounter. All difficulties and obstacles being overcome in tales make children have a more positive look to life and not give up against difficulties. They feel great pleasure as a result of the success they achieve, and thus, they become motivated to achieve more and ready to start to new tasks. In addition, because they solve their own problems, they feel the proud of possessing and sharing the success and the information which they obtained on a certain topic. Since the success is achieved through real experiences and comprehension, it would be more permanent and be able to be transferred to other situations. Children hereby realise themselves, and also socialise while sharing what they do and experience with others. We are all aware of the harm children do to themselves and to their environment because of cartoons, which can be described as the tales of modern life. These are good examples of the reflections of what children see in tale heroes to their daily life. One of the contributions of tales to children's education is making them individuals who are integrated with the society in which the tales have emerged, and its value judgements. By means of what they read and hear in tales, children concretely realise that there are also other people, they have the same rights, and see the consequences of honesty and lying. They learn to look at life with hope and be patient to achieve goals, and observe the negative results of jealousy, what unnecessary fear and suspicion do to people and how important respect, love, forgiveness and sharing are important for friendship (Goksen, 2009). Besides, the lessons that anecdotes, tales and similar texts that are described as stories of the old nurture education aim to give are in excess amounts in tales (Sakaoglu, 1992).

Tales have significant contributions to children's social and cultural development. They take a role by associating the roles of tale heroes to themselves and create their own existence in the society. They announce their independence with these roles.

2.3. Contribution of Tales to Children's Cognitive and Affective Development

Children imagine what they are told as tales. While listening to the narrator, they experience the tale in their imaginary world. In this process, children's horizon of thought and imaginary world come into play. Therefore, contribution is made to their cognitive and affective development. Another contribution of tales in this context is that to children's imaginary world. In one of his poems, Yahya Kemal says "People live as long as they imagine". Is not that so? If you cannot imagine, that means you cannot think. Think that you are like that... Did not everything start in the world with a dream? All discoveries, all inventions, and happiness. According to [Goksen \(2009\)](#), the best place to develop this aspect is the world of tales.

By means of tales, children will develop the ability to understand and evaluate the society they live in, which will be effective in acquiring an important communication skill like showing empathy towards other people. By identifying themselves with tale characters, they can have the opportunity to realise and evaluate themselves, socialise, acquire civilised behaviours, adapt to the society, and learn and adopt national and universal values. Reading tales is a supportive activity for children's language development. Talking about and answering questions about tales, and dramatizing them enable children's development of listening and speaking skills. Tales have important functions in developing their imagination, introducing them the pleasure of language and teaching them the subtleties of their mother tongue. Tales entertain them while doing these, and contribute to their development by making them realise the messages between the lines.

To contribute to children's cognitive and affective development, tales should be chosen in accordance with their developmental stage, and an effective reading activity should be organised ([Gorgu, 2006](#)). Because children's personal development process must be considered. Different developments are observed and named between each age range. For example, the period between 0-2 years is named as infancy, and 2-14 years as childhood in human life. Children's period between 2-6 years is called as 'early childhood period', and 6-14 years as 'late childhood period'. ([Karatay, 2007](#)) Children go through the early childhood period (2-6 years) in the family environment. In this period, they learn language from their mothers, family and environment. This learning occurs without them noticing it and through subconscious processes. Children can express their feelings and thoughts in this period. Although they make mistakes regarding the use of some words and concepts, most of the foundations for language development are laid. For children to be interested in reading and have a reading habit in later ages, books ([Basaran, 2017](#)) have an important place in their lives as a toy at first, and then as a guiding tool.

When children are older than 1, they become interested in colourful toys. When they see the pictures of objects, the name of which they cannot even pronounce, they start telling things about them. For this reason, picture-books that relate to their own worlds should be presented to them even at these early ages, and adults should interpret these pictures in their language. In this way, children start learning about life and nature, shape their personality and will be proud of it ([Goksen, 2009](#)). Pre-school children, particularly 4 and 5-year-olds, mostly like stories with characters that are children and animals. Through the end of this period, they like being read tales or stories. These tales and stories should include many pictures. Positive experiences in this period arouse children's interest in books and reading ([Karatay, 2007](#)). Two-year old children who have learned to speak can listen to a complete, but short story including a single event (e.g. a lost dog finds his way home, or a bird finds a suitable tree for its nest). ([Ciravoglu, 1998](#)). It is known that children acquire most grammar rules of their language in this period. However, the way in which tales or stories are presented in this period is effective in children's being interested in reading. Their attention should be attracted before starting the tale, and then, this attention should be maintained by narrating the tale vividly ([Gorgu, 2006](#)). Thus, tales are of great importance for children in terms of their cognitive and affective development.

3. Lack of Instructive Elements in Tales

Tales are a genre that is essential for children, and adorn and enrich their imaginary worlds. Considering the tales of the Brothers Grimm from this perspective, it becomes necessary to examine tales from an educational perspective. This is because in the tales of the Brothers Grimm, people are burn in fire, fingers are cut, eyes are scratched out, games are played with human bones, people are thrown in wells full of snakes, put into spiked barrels naked, and killed with hot oil in the most violent way. These are presented as if they are ordinary events.

3.1 Gender Discrimination in Tales

Compared to other literary texts or cultural products, tales are based on traditional folk texts like myths. 'Tales are among the most popular types of folk texts. Tales that emerged in primitive tribes are seen as they developed and enriched in later periods' (Gocgun, 2004). Therefore, maintaining tales depends on social approval of the public and its efforts to keep them alive. Tales leave the rules, codes, cultural values and dominant views of the society they exist in to the next generations as inheritance. From a general perspective, tales are cultural products that significantly contribute to the reformulation of a society's basic dynamics. The artificial atmosphere of tales is the design and reflection of the existing social order. 'Tales, myths and dreams are produced from the same fabric. They are all products of an unconscious mind. The first two are the collective unconscious being shaped or illustrated, and dreams are the products of the primary sources that are fed from the collective unconscious, and the individual unconscious' mind (Saydam, 1997). Tales reinforce the discrimination between women and men in terms of language use, whereas they emphasize the necessity of on which opposition individuals' characters should be structured.

The image of beauty that is frequently attributed to women in tales brings the obligation to stay fit and young. This phenomenon of being young has two meanings in terms of sexuality. The first one is the use of the adjective "young lady" to refer to girls who have not lost their virginity. In the tale 'Cinderella', virginity is included symbolically. I think that Cinderella losing her glass shoe after talking to the prince is presented as a symbol of her virginity. The concept of virginity is so important that the tales end with marriage since virginity is lost. The second meaning of the phenomenon of being young is women's having to be young to be sexy. Today, women are ashamed of their wrinkles and feel like they have to hide their faces. The loss of the image of being young leads to a feeling of being betrayed, and causes a helpless disappointment in them. Because the content, definition and meaning of being old have changed in discourse, getting old is like a nightmare from the perspective of women. In my opinion, women feel depressed in their elderly period because they think about the discourse that they have internalised and feel that they do not fit into those stereotypes. Those who have the passion for staying young are usually *femme fatale*. They become obsessed with beauty and being young, and at this expense, they do magic by using various potions to stay young. A good example is the step mother character in the tale 'Snow White' doing magic to stay young and trying to kill Snow White because of jealousy. Being beautiful is so important that the step mother can be in competition with her daughter no matter what the age difference is.

Trying to be always young has an aspect that fetishizes the phenomenon of being young. Through either culture or other factors, being young becomes a phenomenon that does not belong to an individual, but is added externally, constantly formed and modified (Ahiska, 1999). Tales present a moderate scenario with typecasting, routine events and values rather than creating characters on a colourful and fantastic background. Tales have a universal aspect; we can see similar tales anywhere in the world. With unconscious symbols and by establishing interlaced labyrinths beneath the visible surface, they focus on scenarios of gender roles that are appropriate to an ideology. Using unconscious rather than immediateness enable them to have a deep and permanent effect. Besides, their appeal and imaginary structure increases this effect (Sezer, 2004). Tales are the reflection of social conscious. They have the role of conveying the rules and values to the next generation with fairies, heroes, princesses and princes. Therefore, tales are regarded as innocent by the society, but they provide the basis for children's developing a personality for their adult life. Tales embed social codes into children's unconscious through their imagination. Those with adult characters teach children how gender distribution would be like when they get older. The design of tales present the reformulation of the social culture as independent, sensible, having authority and independent roles for men, and dependent, taking care of children and spouses, emotional and house-related roles for women. Conveyance of social gender roles as stereotypes is designed to make developing personalities be compatible with the social pattern (Sezer, 2010).

3.2. Image of Death in Tales

One of the scenes that are presented in Grimms' tales and can set a bad example to children is dead people resuscitating and going back to their lives. In the tale "Good and Evil Wife" the girl is thrown from the bridge to the river, and she gets out as a snowy duck. Later in the tale, the same duck is beheaded and turns into a beautiful princess. Another tale with a character that resuscitates after death is "Sister and Brother". In this tale, the step brother and step sister together kills the princess. Although she dies, she resuscitates afterwards and comes to breastfeed her child. Another example that can set a bad example for children is the tale "the Singing Bone". In this tale, when a pipe is made from a human bone, it begins to

talk. In another tale, the hero takes the dead person with him. After the body gets warm for some time, it resuscitates. In the tale "Three Snake Leaves", three leaves resuscitate a dead person. In the tale "The Wolf and the Seven Young Goats", the dead goats resuscitate afterwards. In another tale, although a boy is thrown into a well full of snakes, he gets out without any harm. In these tales of Brothers Grimm, the topic of death is quite different because heroes resuscitate after they die. Such thoughts are very dangerous for children (Gunes H., 2006).

3.3. Image of Violence in Tales

According to experts, because of pressure, violence and other negative examples in tales, these scenes can be stored in children's unconscious for a long time and cause them to be shy and introverted. What is important here is children and their world. It is clear that getting into their world with fear and violence will cause unrepairable damage in the future. Regarding this basic problem, some scenes can be excluded by sticking to the authentic tale. Particularly, all scenes including violence and fear, in other words those that set a bad example for children, should be excluded from the tales by preserving their structure. Instead of presenting scenes such as scratching out eyes and beheading, the tales can be concluded by simply saying that those people are punished. As discussed above, if tales including such scenes are to set a bad example for children, these can be, in Dayioğlu's words, "swathed with pink veils" rather than not telling these (Gunes H., 2006).

4. Results

The language is the most important instrument used by communities to convey their culture to new generations. This act is performed verbally or in writing, by using various products of the folk literature. To ensure social communication, tales play an important role in teaching the pronunciation, vocabulary, rhetoric and discourse expressions.

Especially, tales contribute to effectively teaching language in mother tongue Education. vocabulary, idioms, lexical bundles, aesthetics and proverbs of a language can be seen intensively in such products of the folk literature. Besides, development can be observed in children's skill of expressing themselves depending on their development in vocabulary. Presenting an aesthetic from of literature, these rich works also develop comprehension and expression skills. To be able to contribute to children's language development, tales should be categorized, organized and used in accordance with the intended purpose for which language specialists and educators should carry out collaborative studies.

Tales teach children how their mother tongue is used, and show them the flexibility, richness and fluency of this language. Focusing on the contribution of tales to language acquisition, Helimoglu (2002) says: "Which literary genre, oral or written, can teach individuals their mother tongue better than tales that are adorned with all characteristics of spoken language such as reduplication, metaphors, rhymes, idioms and proverbs?"

Tales enriching the imaginary world of children by reflecting the childish sensitivity and feeding the child soul prepare children to the life and the future. The symbolic elements in tales present the real life. In these fiction works, children gain some of the experiences that prepare them to the future.

In this study, it is emphasized that tales have positive contributions to children's cognitive, socio-cultural and affective development as well as negative contributions. The distinctions between women and men, and misinformation about death lead to children's development in the wrong direction. It is also pointed out that these negative aspects should be avoided, and in what age group tales' education should be provided is discussed.

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