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## Examination of illustrated story books published between the years of 2004-2011 for 4-8 age group children in terms of illustration

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### Abstract

During the early childhood for the development of the child, picture books, or illustrated books, have an important role. Illustrations are an indispensable part of the story and an integral element to the text. The purpose of this study is to examine the illustrated story books published between the years of 2004-2013 for 4-8 age group children in terms of illustration. Screening model was used in this study. The study group was determined by random sampling method, and 50 picture story books in Turkish were selected in this regard. The illustration characteristics of the picture books were evaluated by the criteria table prepared taking the expert opinions into account. In general, when picture books enter a child's life, many things are changing. Giving meanings to life, learning concepts, gaining knowledge and experience about life, and acquisition of social rules and manners come into existence. In order for the children who are not yet literate to perceive the story read by adults, they must be supported with visual perception through pictures in addition to auditory perception. Accordingly, preparing visual illustration carefully and according to the developmental characteristics of children by the artists has led to the emergence of more qualified publications on behalf of children's literature.

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### 1. Introduction

Illustrated story books are books that are highly effective in children's bonding with life. Picture books which are

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an important kind of children's literature are works in which words and illustrations are combined as special, which are suitable for the child's perception, interest, attention, emotions, thoughts and imagination world, whose content are suitable for children, and which lead to reading habits. (Cianciolo, 1997, p. 2-3). In children's relation that they build with illustrated story books, the share of the visual language cannot be underestimated undoubtedly. Especially the age group of illiterate children will follow the story with pictures. If they are left alone with books, while turning the pages they read the story with pictures again, reconstruct, make additions and modifications and they create their own interpretations. The emotion intended to convey in the story read to them is transferred through the visual language, forms and colours. Pictures are a colourful world that triggers the imagination of children and also develops their aesthetic appreciation. Appealing to the world of emotions, positively affecting their mental development, providing recognition of the world and the living things in it, pictures are indispensable for the development of children. Tür and Turla (1999) express the importance of the stimulating environment, provided educational materials and toys, especially the books in the education of children from birth and in laying the foundations for becoming an adult individual who can adapt to the 21st century. The illustrations in the picture books are the most important element of the story and are an integral part of the text. The illustrations, decorations and other visual objects used in children's books, as they have an effective role in the explanation, completion and understanding of the text, are different works of art which integrate the text. (Yurt, 2011, p. 72).

Picture books which are children's first acquainted books as part of their environment make a huge impact on their entire development model, and when arranged and expressed well, the beauty of expression is illustrated with words and pictures. Picture books, as well as stimulating children in pre-school age with language and pictures, could ensure their development, and even urge them to obtain critical consciousness (Gönen&Veziroğlu, 2013, p. 3). Nowadays, with the impact of technology, pictures are produced by many techniques. The choice of technique is also done according to where pictures are to be used and to whom they will address. The most common illustration techniques are known as dry paint, watercolor, ink, gouache, pastel, collage, spray and computer illustration techniques. (Tuna, 1997, p. 14).

In this study, the purpose is to examine the illustrated story books published between the years of 2004-2013 for 4-8 age group children in terms of illustration.

## 2. Method

This research was conducted using scanning model which is one of the qualitative research methods. Scanning models are research approaches aiming to describe a past or present situation in its existing terms. Events, individuals or objects that are the subject of research are tried to be defined under the circumstances they are and are observed and determined with no effort to change or affect them somehow. (İslamoğlu, 2009, p. 85). In the study, Turkish illustrated story books published between the years 2004-2013 for children aged 4-8 were examined in terms of illustration features.

The research sample is composed of illustrated story books for 4-8 age group children published in Turkish between the years 2004-2013 by participating publishers to the 32nd International İstanbul Tüyp Book Fair.

In the research, in order to explore the illustration features of the story books, the criteria table was used which was developed based on the examination of related literature by the researchers and considering expert opinions. The Criteria Table consists of a total of 21 items in two sub-dimensions as Illustration Techniques of Children's Picture Books and Visual Expression of Children's Picture Books.

## 3. Findings and Review

This section consists of findings regarding the illustration technique of the illustration features and visual presentation properties of the illustrated children books.

The findings regarding the characteristics of the illustration technique of the illustration properties of the children's picture books examined in the study are presented in Table 1.

**Table 3.1. The Distribution of Illustrated Children's Books According to Illustration Technique Features**

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS		YES		NO	
		f	%	f	%
1	In the story is the author and illustrator the same person?	7	14	43	86
2	Are pictures prepared in a way to cover both pages?	26	52	24	48
3	Is the illustration of the story conducted with the conventional techniques (pastel, watercolor, pencil, etc.)?	24	48	26	52
4	Is the illustration of the story conducted with the contemporary techniques (photography, computer, etc.) ?	26	52	24	48
5	Are the pictures painted with realistic descriptions?	14	28	36	72
6	Are the pictures deformed?	36	72	14	28
7	In the pictures, is the line-painting style used?	38	76	12	24
8	Are the pictures painted with two-dimensional depictions?	10	20	40	80
9	In the pictures, is depth perception used?	43	86	7	14
10	Is the environmental imagery (or decor) illustrated in detail?	39	78	11	22
11	Is the environmental imagery (or decor) left to the child's imagination?	13	26	37	74
12	Are the picture depictions black-and-white?	0	0	50	100
13	Are picture depictions colored?	50	100	0	0

When the Table 3.1 is analyzed, it is seen that of the illustrated story books establishing the research sample, in 7 (14%) of them, authors and illustrators are the same, in 43 (86%) of them, they are different; in 26 (52%) of them, pictures are prepared in a way to cover both pages, and in 24 (48%) of them not; in 24 (48%) of them the illustration is done by conventional techniques and in 26 (52%) of them by modern techniques. In 14 (28%) of these books, the pictures are painted with realistic depictions, and in 36 (72%) of them not; in 36 (72%) of them, the pictures are deformed, and in 14 (28%) of them they are not deformed; in 38 (76%) of them, in the picture line-painting style is used, and in 12 (24%) of them it is not used; in 10 (20%) of them, two-dimensional image description is used and in 40 (80%) them, it is not used; in 43 (86%) of them, perception of depth is used in the pictures, and in 7 (14%) of them it is not used; in 39 (78%) of them, description of the environment is depicted in detail, and in 13 (26%) of them, description of the environment is left to the child's imagination. It is also seen that the entire picture description (100%) is colored, and black and white imagery is never used.

Findings regarding the visual narrative characteristics of the illustrated children's books are presented in Table 3.2

**Table 3.2. The Distribution of Illustrated Children's Books According to Visual Narrative Characteristics**

QUESTIONNAIRE ITEMS		YES		NO	
		f	%	f	%
1	Is the cover picture attractive and intriguing?	34	68	16	32
2	Are the colors of the objects and things in the pictures used the same as in real life?	46	92	4	8
3	Are the colors of the objects and things in the pictures used different from the colors of the real life in a way to urge imagination?	4	8	46	92
4	Is there variation harmony instead of color harmony?	19	38	31	62
5	Is there similar colors harmony of the color harmony rule?	40	80	10	20
6	Is there single color harmony of the color harmony rule?	4	8	46	92
7	Is there complementary color harmony of the color harmony rule?	37	74	13	26

When the Table 3.2 is analysed, it is seen that of the illustrated story books establishing the research sample, in 34 (%68) of them, the cover picture is attractive and intriguing, in 16 (%32) of them, it is not; in 46 (%92) the colors of the objects and things in the pictures are used the same as in real life and in 4 (%8) of them, they are used different from the colours of the real life in a way to urge imagination. Of the story books examined, it is seen that in 19 (%38) of them, there is variation harmony instead of colour harmony, and in 31 (%62) of them there is not; in

40 (%80) of them, there is similar colours harmony and in 10 of them there is not; in 4 (%8) of them, there is single colour harmony and in 46 (%92) of them there is not; in 37 (%74) of them, there is complementary color harmony and in 13 (%26) of them, there is not such harmony.

Of the illustrated story books making up the research sampling, in most of them the authors and illustrators of the books are different people. The purpose of this item is not to examine the vocational and artistic proficiency of the authors and illustrators. It is merely to describe the situation in child literature.

When the illustrated story books making up the research sampling are examined in terms of illustration technique characteristics, it is seen that in all the books colored pictures are used, most of the pictures which are used are deformed, and in illustrations, realistic descriptions are less used. Deforming the form by changing the ratios present in real life and illustrating some parts exaggeratingly means deformation. For example, characters whose heads are bigger than their bodies and whose eyes are illustrated immensely are welcomed in the children's world. That is why, cartoons are enjoyed and watched a lot by children.

Dilidüzgün (2002) points this detail by expressing "child literature is a kind of literature and should be conducted by taking child reality or the principle of children relativity."

Yurttaş (1995) defines "child relativity" principle as "addressing the children's dream power, comprising the language and expression which they can read and understand easily and by enjoying, processing issues which will interest them, feeding them in terms of thoughts and feelings, and the fiction and the plot are not complex but at a level that they can grasp, and as purified from distracting details"

It is seen that in the illustrations in the books forming the research sampling, mostly line-painting style was used. The arrangements of lines and shapes in the picture is the rational part of the picture. However, as the arrangement of colors will directly affect an individual's emotions, color refers to the emotional side of the picture. In the combined use of more than one color, providing harmony of colors and integrity between colors is very important. The use of colors and lines should create a whole and should convey the same feelings and thoughts. In this context, when selecting colors, they should be supportive to the text and compatible with the descriptions. As the page layout design care will create an environment providing opportunities for the children to acquire positive affective characteristics related to that book and to meet the needs of arts education, graphic artists, responsibly, should design them by taking into account children's artistic perception and interpretation, level of development and according to the development principles (Sever, 2011, p. 59).

When the pages of a book are opened, children perceive the illustration on two consecutive pages as one integrated whole. It is observed that the illustrations in the books comprising the research sampling are mostly painted in a way to cover both pages.

It is also observed that the illustrations in the books forming the research sampling are mostly done with three dimensional descriptions and the depth perception is used, and they are done half by conventional techniques and half by modern techniques. Depth perception not only predisposes to the formation of children's perspective information but also teaches children the position of the object in the place and increases the reality of the story with the children (Abacı, 2007, p.66). Illustrations in children's books prepared by watercolor techniques as one of conventional techniques are works that are always interesting for kids, intriguing in terms of aesthetics and intimate. The peculiar feature of watercolor, its allowing light-shadow games adds dimension to the picture and makes it interesting. It is an important detail that the watercolor techniques used in illustrations in children's books should be in live and bright colors (Mardi, 2006, p. 141).

In the illustrations of the books examined, it is seen that mostly description of the environment is depicted in detail. Using this feature has an important contribution to children's understanding the story, animating it in the dream, and keeping it in mind. It is seen that when analyzed in accordance with this information, illustrated story books are appropriately prepared according to the criteria mentioned in the literature, and similar findings were found by the research made by Konar (2004) and Bilgin (2011).

When picture story books forming the research sampling are analyzed, it is seen that cover pictures have mostly conspicuousness which will affect the child's visual perception and are arrangements which will urge curiosity. Pictures mobilize the thoughts and feelings of children by colors and shapes, creates a visual learning environment for them, and improves thinking skills by their senses. Thanks to their visual perception, children notice different pictures, the differences between the pictures and the location of the pictures. While thinking about the pictures they see, they establish causation relation thanks to pictures (Ciravoğlu, 1999, p. 188).

Color is an item in the picture which appeals to the emotions the most and is sensational. When designers visualize the information, they should use the color as a tool to create an emotional impact on children. In this context, in children's books, book pages and the cover designs, using the color harmony according to the sense which is wanted to be created is very important and is a job that requires skill. In the books prepared for the children, the cover is an invitation for the children to turn to books, examine and read them and the first stimulator which helps children to turn to books. The aesthetics, layout and coloring of the cover picture and design must arouse curiosity and interest towards books with children and should be an impressive start in bringing the love and habit of reading. The cover should give the child a clue about the content with the design and illustration (Karatay, 2011, p. 90).

In the early childhood books, pictures are of great importance. A beautifully illustrated book will contribute to the development of the aesthetic sense with children.

Levin and Lesgold (1978) state that the pictures used in books expand the contents of the story, and stories illustrated with pictures are well understood and better perceived and leave a lasting impact on children. In Pressley, Pigot and Bryant's research done on three-four year old children attending kindergarten, pictures are seen as a major contributor in understanding of the texts illustrated with pictures, easily remembering subsequently and learning permanently. Additionally, in a survey conducted by Brookshire et al. (2002), the results showing that children prefer to read books containing vibrant and lifelike pictures, pictures affect the child's interest in reading books, and books that have image and text relationship affect children's understanding the book were obtained (Gönen, 1988 p.32-38).

In illustrations, use of color harmony is an important issue. As well as expression with linear and figural descriptions, the use of color is also interesting for the kids. When using a combination of multiple colors, achieving harmony between colors and integrity is very important. The use of colors and lines should form a whole. When choosing colors, they should be supportive to the emotion the text gives, the colors of objects and assets in pictures should match the situation expressed in the text, and they should be compatible with descriptions.

When each page of 50 illustrated story books forming the sample group is examined, it is seen that nearly half of them have variety harmony instead of color harmony rule, most of them have close color harmony and complementary color harmony, and very few have single color harmony. Close color harmony is the color harmony made by intermediary colors. When these colors come together, they will reduce the chrominance of each other. They create calm and gentle emotional effects on human psychology. Multiple colors harmony is the color harmony made by the main colors and creates the opposite emotional effect of the one close color harmony creates in human psychology. It is used in creating conflict, unrest and chaos effect. Complementary color harmony, on the other hand, is the color harmony used to draw attention to a situation. It is made by a intermediary color that is a mixture of a primary color and the other two secondary colors and when these colors are used in combination, they enhance the effect of each other. For example, in the vast blue sky, an orange bird which is a tiny spot is immediately noticeable because the blue color which is the complementary of the orange color increases the severity of the orange color and allows us to immediately detect it (Abacı, 2007, p. 69-75).

#### **4. Conclusion and suggestions**

As a result of the analysis of the "illustration technique" properties of the illustrated story books forming the research sampling, it is seen that in most of them the authors and illustrators are different, in few of them they are the same; in almost half of them, pictures are prepared in a way to cover two consecutive pages; in almost half of them, illustrations are made by conventional techniques and in another half by modern techniques.

It is also observed that in one third of these books, illustrations are made by real descriptions and in almost two thirds of the books, illustrations are made in a deformed way to appeal to the pleasure of the children, and in pictures line-picture style is used; in one fifth of them pictures are made by two dimensional descriptions; in most of the books depth perception is used in the pictures; all the picture descriptions are colored; black and white descriptions are never used; in two thirds of the books, environmental descriptions are illustrated in detail, and in one third of the books, the environmental description is left to the children's imagination.

Regarding the "visual expression" properties of the illustrated story books forming the research sampling, as a result of the analysis, it has been observed that in more than half of the books, the cover picture is attractive and

intriguing; in most of them, the colors of the objects and assets in the pictures are the same as the ones in real life, and in some they are used in a way to stimulate imagination; in almost half of the books, there is variety harmony rather than color harmony rule; in most of them there is close color and complementary color harmony and in very few of them there is single color harmony.

As a result, most of the illustrated story books which are examined are seen, in terms of illustration technique and visual expression properties, to have characteristics which are accepted in the related literature.

Publishers preparing picture story books for children should contact field experts, child development and preschool educators and their opinions and suggestions should be taken in the process of the preparation of books, taking into account the child's age and developmental characteristics, in order to create and submit quality products for children. In addition, it should be ensured that the author who writes the story and the illustrator who does the illustration work together in a coordinated way and the feelings and situations which are intended to be conveyed overlap in written and visually. Therefore, publishers must bolster the illustration artists and the illustrations, without considering commercial concerns, must be used with appropriate colors and methods that cater to the children's age and development.

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