

Stories about Children with Disabilities: The Writing Process and the Opinions of the Storywriters

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Abstract

Problem Statement: Successful inclusion is established through understanding and respecting differences among individuals. This study emerged from the idea that books play an important role in this understanding and from the lack of published children's books about disabilities. Although, stories are very important in any educational curriculum, there are no example stories including children with disabilities in Turkish children's literature (C'sL).

Purpose of Study: The purpose of this research is to examine the opinions of pre-service teachers about their experiences during the storybook writing process.

Methods: This qualitative study was conducted in two phases. The first phase focused on how stories about successful inclusion situations in the community were developed by college students. In the second phase the experiences of the storywriters were examined through the use of semi-structured interviews. The data were analyzed inductively.

Findings and Results: The outcomes of the interviews revealed that the story writers gained positive experiences, and the writing process contributed to their individual and career development. The interviews further showed that the stories would increase the social acceptance of children with disabilities.

Conclusions and Recommendations: Attitudes, opinions, expectations, feelings and thoughts can be changed by reading storybooks about children with disabilities in Turkey. These changes are based on greater familiarization of special education, the development of positive

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intentions toward individuals with disabilities (ID), and the encouragement of positive interactive relationships among children of different abilities. This could help the society improve their view of what professional practice could be by developing insights to explore alternative ways of looking at practices and providing access to storybooks about integrated early childhood and primary literacy experiences.

Keywords: Stories for children, children with disabilities, inclusion, storybook writing process.

Education provides children with an understanding of their social positions, the era and the society in which they live. They benefit from the knowledge and experiences throughout their lives to develop their personalities. In this respect, the books that are read in childhood are particularly significant (Bozdag, 2000). Starting from an early age, most children start to realize the differences and similarities of the people around them and themselves. Those who are two years old or younger can usually differentiate the physical properties such as skin and hair colour. This awareness sets the stage for children noticing unfamiliar characteristics such as facial hair, glasses and disabilities. Although they may be worried about these differences, it is important to give them time and opportunities where they can talk about this and express how they feel (Williams, Inkster & Blaska, 2005).

The content of books that correspond to children's requirements, interests, mental, emotional and psychological development, and most importantly that can be read by children with pleasure, should address their interests and life experiences. They should be age-related and comprehensible. The story should have a simple and realistic plot; the actions should have reasonable results; and the characters should be so real that there should be no suspicions in the child's mind (Ataseven & Inandi, 2000). In addition, the pictures in the books should be related to the topics, explanatory, interpretative, enjoyable and attractive (Sever, 2007). When children's books are written in a way that leads the children to fill in certain blanks, their limited life experience is enriched, as they can think about different kinds of people and their developing values and culture become more apparent. In this way, children can adapt more easily to their social and cultural environment (Ataseven & Inandi, 2000).

Can children's books about differences help the reader adapt to society? This is a recently argued topic in Turkey. Regarding this point, Alpog (2000) emphasizes that children's stories should express that a different child or one with disabilities has a lot of characteristics in common with the normally developing children, and these different people can be successful and talented in some subjects and share these experiences with others. It should also be expressed that the differences are nothing to fear, and that they bring diversity to the community. In the stories, it is important to note that the possibilities of communication will be lost if we divide the world into 'us' and 'them'. Success can be achieved by creating characters with whom the children can identify (Alpog, 2000; Alpog, 2003).

In 1992, a study by Blaska and Lynch reviewed 500 award-winning books for children, published 1987-1991, for the inclusion and depiction of individuals with disabilities (ID). Of the books that were reviewed, ten (2%) included ID in the story line or illustrations. Within those ten books, ID was integral to the story line in only six of the books (Blaska, 2003).

In recent literature, there are several stories and books written for children with various disabilities and chronic illnesses, such as attention deficit disorders, attention deficit and hyperactivity disorders, AIDS, autism, Down's syndrome, hearing impairment, hydrocephalus, mental retardation, visual impairment and other types of disabilities (Ashton, 2006; the National Dissemination Centre for Children with Disabilities, 2001). These stories involve texts about different groups of disabilities supported with pictures and examples derived from real life. Reading books about ID helps children to express their feelings and to ask questions. They can have the opportunity to develop empathy and an understanding for disabled people (Williams et al., 2005).

In terms of characters, Turkish stories and novels mainly feature normally developing individuals. Having scanned the stories for children, we could find only one story about a person with a disability (Ural, 1993). However, those with ID are also members of society. The success of inclusion, which allows children with disabilities to be educated with their peers, depends on the acceptance of the children with disabilities by both society and their peers. C'sL, which has an important role in children's lives, must be enriched in the aspects of the lives with similar and different characteristics of ID. Starting from an early age, children must be guided to be more sensitive, insightful and tolerant towards others. They must acquire the skills to cooperate and support each other. To this end, books about people with disabilities are extremely important. If the stories show the problems and the solutions within the lives of the people with disabilities, children can better understand characters with disabilities and their differences and can thus develop tolerance for them.

The fact that there are no books for children that are about children with disabilities has motivated the researcher of this project to educate pre-service teachers to write books for children that are about ID. Stories can have an important role in the education of teachers in the field of special education to explain the implications of an identified need and identify strategies that could be used to support children with and without disabilities (Jarvis, Dyson, Thomas, Graham, Iantaffi & Burchell, 2004). This could help pre-service teachers not only advance in their understanding in the field and knowledge of richer practical repertoires, but also present their material in a child's voice, that offers a significant 'reframing' for many, which has the potential to lead to practical change (Jarvis et al., 2004). The purpose of this research was to examine the opinions of pre-service teachers about their experiences during the storybook writing process.

Method

This qualitative study was conducted in two phases. The story writing process was used in the first phase to conduct an action process and to collect and analyse the data. Action process workshops were conducted to prepare children's storybooks about children with disabilities. During the second phase, the data were collected through semi-structured interviews about story writing processes from the participants and analysed inductively.

Participants

The participants of this study were pre-service teachers (college students) from the Departments of Early Childhood Education and Special Education at Faculty of Education at Anadolu University. With the aim of writing children's literature that addressed children with special needs, it was announced to undergraduate students at the Faculty of Education, which includes special education, early childhood education and primary education, that a study on facilitating the acceptance of students with special needs by their peers in inclusive classes would be conducted. Volunteers were asked to register to participate in this study (in the related department). Considering this announcement, 67 undergraduate students registered for the study. At the pre-meeting held with these students, a consent form was given to the volunteers. This document informed students that a long period (maximum ten weeks) study was planned, their attendance to the study was important in order to implement the study successfully, and during the study process, volunteers who wanted to leave the study would be able to do so. They were given one week to make their decision. During this time, 19 volunteers agreed and signed the consent form. Later 2 out of 19 volunteers left during the study. The remaining students (17) from special education and early childhood education departments attended all phases of the study. Volunteers included 12 students from the Department of Special Education, and 5 from the Department of Early Childhood Education (Table 1). All participants had taken at least one course related to special education, and six of them had taken a course entitled "C'sL".

Table 1
Participants in the Story Writing Process

	<i>Special Education Department</i>				<i>Early Childhood Education Department</i>	
	Female		Male		Female	Male
Sex of participants						
Number of Participants	6		6		5	-
School Years/Grades	2/Sophomore	4/Senior	2/Sophomore	1/Junior	4/Senior	1/Junior
Number	2	4	2	1	3	5

Data Collection and Procedure

Story writing process. During the story writing process, nine workshops were conducted during seven months, usually at fortnightly intervals. The first of these was organized to ascertain the determination of the participants and provide general explanations. The participants shared their experiences during the story writing

process and their storybooks with the other participants in these workshops. The workshops lasted approximately 1.5 to 2.5 hours. Twenty-five pages of field notes were written by the researcher, including workshop agendas and the responses to the stories of the children, other stakeholders and the participants. Three days before the first workshop, the topic of the workshop was determined and announced to the participants via email and on the school board. The first workshop was directed by the researcher. The following ones were directed by a selected participant and the decisions about who would direct the following workshop were determined at the end of each workshop. The researcher participated in all the workshops and supervised all participants. The aims, activities and decisions of the workshops are shown in Table 2.

Table 2

The aims, activities and decisions of the workshops

Workshop Number	Aim	Activity	Decision (decision was taken)
1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to inform the participants about children with disabilities and inclusion. to determine what could be provided in order to increase the acceptance of children with disabilities by their peers. 	Discussion about: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the topics of children with disabilities and inclusion what happened in the inclusive classes what we could do to promote inclusive classes selecting a moderator for each of the following workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> storybooks about children with disabilities should be written the participants were required to examine the Turkish children's stories (15 day period) A participant was selected to direct the following workshops.
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to discuss the story writing process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> content, writing styles, target age group; illustration styles of the obtained stories discussion of the reasons why there are no SCD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> two participants who had experience of children with disabilities were chosen to prepare a presentation in order to share their experiences
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to share participants' experience about children with disabilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> two participants shared their experiences of children with intellectual disabilities and their parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> all the participants should observe both children with disabilities and their parents both at home and at school the support meetings would be held for the participants who wanted to meet with children with disabilities and their families

Table 2 Continue

Workshop Number	Aim	Activity	Decision (decision was taken)
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to share participants' observations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> participants related their observation and their story plots. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to read the stories aloud to each other
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to discuss story writing principles to share participants' first draft 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the researcher and participants discussed the narration principles and criteria (length, content, view point, etc.) related to C'sL, and selected the vocabulary for children with disabilities. the comprehension level of the primary students was discussed. five participants read their story/stories aloud the participants gave recommendations to each other about their the stories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to read the stories aloud to each other
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to read participants' storybooks 	all participants read their storybooks aloud	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to get permission from the elementary schools, which have inclusive classes, to read the storybooks created by the participants aloud in the inclusive classes
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to revise participants' storybooks 	the participants read their stories aloud and revised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the participants should take notes about questions and suggestions coming from the inclusive class students
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to revise participants' storybooks 	<p>all the participants presented their experiences in classes</p> <p>all the participants shared the children's reactions and the corrections they had made and considered these reactions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to ask for assistance for illustrations of the storybooks from the Art Department of the Departments of Education and Fine Arts
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to complete the storybooks 	<p>the final drafts of nineteen written and illustrated stories were typed and saved on computer.</p> <p>the final drafts of the stories were revised with the participants</p>	

At the end of the story writing process about children with disabilities, nineteen stories were completed related to different disabilities. Table 3 presents the titles and content of the stories, which were written in Turkish.

Table 3

The Titles and Content of the Stories

Title	Content
Rabbit without a Tail	The adventures of a rabbit without a tail who copes with his friends' making fun of him and who is later accepted by his friends
Ahmet and His Friends	Ahmet, a boy in a wheelchair, cures a wounded pigeon that came to his balcony. This pigeon helps Ahmet build a relationship with his friends to share and join in their games.
Teacher Zeynep	The wheelchair adventures of regular students and teacher Zeynep, who helps a student in a wheelchair who is going to join this class.
Magic Feather	This is a fantasy story about a girl who cannot walk. In her dream, she talks about life to a toy soldier and a sailor who have lost their legs.
Hero with Three Legs	A lion with three legs. It tells of the difficulties that he experiences and his cooperation with his friends to cope with the problems.
My Wings: Two Little Falcons	The feelings, the difficulties and the struggles of a stork whose wings are broken and two little falcons that helps her.
Life is Beautiful	About a high school student who has to use a wheelchair. The story is a first person narration that tells of his achievements on the disabled basketball team and in the disabled dancing group. It also tells of his interaction with his environment and how he is positively affected by his achievements.
Little Chick	About a little chick with one eye and its relationships with its family.
Beautiful Blue Eyes	About a student whose sight has deteriorated. It is about his problems before the diagnosis, his period of adapting to his friends after the diagnosis and the regulations in the school, which are enacted for him.
Let's Play Guiding Eyes Game	A visually disabled student is about to join a new class. Before he comes to the class, the games that the other students are demonstrating develop the students' tolerance and understanding.
Rainbow	A blind student at high school; his interactions with his father and his achievements in music.
You Should Try	A primary school student who is trying to prepare homework about helping each other. She comes across a blind man on the street.
Birthday Present	The story of how a boy with visual disabilities changes direction after he receives a colouring set as a birthday present.
Dream of Omar	Omar is the son of a poor family. He needs to buy a hearing aid device for himself, and for that he needs to work in the bazaar after school.

Table 3 Continue

Title	Content
Mommy, What Does Rainbow Mean?	A blind girl hears about a rainbow from the kids in a park, and asks her mother 'Mommy, what is a rainbow?' After that, she develops an interaction with the kids in the park.
Celebration Present	Ali is a hearing impaired boy. He learns how to make shoes and makes a pair of shoes for his mother as a celebration gift.
School Love	About a child who has intellectual disabilities and spasticity and who cannot walk properly. The story draws attention to this child's happiness about starting school and achievements that he gains in skills.
Best Friendships	The characteristics of a student who has hydrocephaly, the negative reactions of his friends in the first days of school and the change of these reactions in a positive way with the help of the teacher.
Özgür's World	A child with autism; his reactions to changes in routines and repeating behaviours. It also tells about a relationship that is initiated by one of his peers.

All the stories included the problems that ID children encounter; they emphasized the positive and negative experiences of the characters with a solution to the problems. The main themes of the stories were about understanding, collaboration, and respect of differences. We are pleased to note that after this research, these 19 stories were published by an educational book company.

Interviews. Although all the participants were invited to attend an individual face-to-face interview, only 11 of them volunteered and had time to share their experiences (Table 4).

Table 4

Participants who Attended the Interview

	<i>Special Education Department</i>		<i>Early Education Department</i>	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Number of Participants	3	3	5	-
School Years/Grades	4/Senior	1/Junior	2/Senior	1/Junior
Number of participants	3	1	2	5

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with each participant individually by the researcher. All interviews were audio recorded. A code name was used for each

participant to assure anonymity. The interviews lasted from 18 to 25 minutes. The interview questions are given in Appendix 1.

Researcher Features

The researcher has a bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree from the Department of Special Education. She has worked as an instructor at the university since 1986. She supervised in instructional practice for pre-service teachers for 27 years at the Department of Special Education. In addition to this, she instructed Teaching Skills and Concepts to Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, Applied Behavioral Analysis and Development of Individualized Education Program courses at the undergraduate level. She also teaches graduate courses (Qualitative Research, Applied Behavior Analysis and Developing Social Competence) and supervises theses in the same field.

Data Analysis and Credibility

All the interviews were transcribed by the researcher; the transcriptions were confirmed by another colleague studying in the area of special education. All the data sections that were indexed and interpreted were coded simultaneously using 20 different codes from the transcriptions. The coded data sections were omitted, and the data which had the same codes were collected in a file. Two copies of these files were prepared. Each file was analysed independently by the researcher and her colleague and main themes and sub-themes were formed. The researchers formed the themes through negotiation and agreement after comparing all the themes. Another colleague revised the themes and seven main themes were obtained. A third colleague revised results and research reports, and arranged subthemes. Finally, the themes were verified taking into consideration the field notes written at the workshops. Thus the researcher tried to provide credibility and reliability.

Results

Seven main themes were determined by evaluating the opinions of the participants about story writing process. These themes were: aim, insufficiency of Turkish C'sL about ID, observations, opinions and contributions of the stakeholders, benefits, writing process and problems, and suggestions for story writers when writing SCD (Table 5). Numbers given in parenthesis are the number (frequency) of participants stating similar opinions.

Table 5

Summary of Main Themes, Subthemes and Exemplary Quotes

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes - Explanations - Frequencies</i>	<i>Exemplary quote</i>
Aim	<p>The aim included two subthemes. All of the story writers mentioned their <i>social aims</i>. Only one of the participants said that she had an individual aim.</p> <p>Social aims</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To provide the acceptance of ID by society (11) • To familiarize the characteristics of children with disabilities to normally developing ones (10) • To make contributions to create C'sL about children with disabilities (3) • To make contributions to the field of special education, and to give hope (2) • To reflect the emotions of ID (1) <p>Individual aim</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal satisfaction 	<p><i>"My aim is ... ID are not well known by society. Our basic aim in this study is to help normally developed individuals recognize children with disabilities. This group includes students, adults and regular primary class teachers. My basic aim is to familiarize ID and facilitate their acceptance by the community."</i></p> <p><i>"I would like to receive personal satisfaction by making a contribution to the field."</i></p>
<i>Insufficiency of Turkish Children's Literature about ID</i>	<p>Approximately 1000 children's stories in C'sL were researched by the participants during the story writing process. Eight of the participants stated that they could not find any children's SCD, and two of them stated that they found only one story.</p>	<p><i>"When I searched children's libraries and the market, I scanned approximately 300 books, but none of them mentioned children with disabilities. This is terrible. In our environment and society, there are negative and insensitive attitudes toward people with a disability."</i></p>
<i>Observations</i>	<p>The participants expressed their opinions about the experiences that they gained while reading their storybooks to ID, their parents and normally developing children. Therefore, the observation theme was formed into two sub-themes.</p>	

Table 5 Continue

Themes	Subthemes - Explanations - Frequencies	Exemplary quote
	<p data-bbox="528 535 836 613"><i>Observations on the children with disabilities and their parents</i></p> <ul data-bbox="528 725 836 1451" style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="528 725 836 837">• Educational and social necessities of the children with disabilities and their parents (7) <li data-bbox="528 840 836 918">• The feeling of shame of the families with children with mental retardation (5) <li data-bbox="528 920 836 1086">• The attitude differences between families with children with disabilities and normally developing children toward their children (2) <li data-bbox="528 1088 836 1144">• ID need understanding rather than sympathy (2) <li data-bbox="528 1146 836 1258">• In inclusion classes, the children with disabilities were able to comprehend the stories (2) <li data-bbox="528 1261 836 1395">• The attitudes of two families, one of which is hopeful and the other one is desperate about the future of their children (1) <li data-bbox="528 1397 836 1451">• The success of a child with severe mental retardation (1) 	<p data-bbox="863 562 1256 640">One of the participants observed triplet siblings with mental retardation and their mother.</p> <p data-bbox="863 642 1256 1263"><i>“Compared to the other mothers, their mother was the most optimistic and positive one. ... The triplets, who are thirteen years old, have been attending the school for five years. Their mother gets up at 5 a.m. to change their nappies and comb their hair. Their mother says that they are happy hours for her when they spend time together, and she is hopeful for them...there was another mother at school. The teacher thought her child would be able to read soon. The child was mentally retarded but not at a serious level. ... The mother was always pessimistic; for example, she thought the child could not do anything, be educated and/or could even be stabbed on the street. The teacher gave this mother’s child a welcoming task to the triplets. The mother criticized the teacher as she thought the child could not achieve this task. ... She did not let the child do it although she could have managed.”</i></p> <p data-bbox="863 1265 1256 1377">Seven participants stated that the observed families with children with disabilities have necessities for their educational and social life.</p> <p data-bbox="863 1480 1256 1671"><i>“It is quite normal for a normally developing child to finish her/his school. However, for this child (a child with severe mental retardation) it is miraculous to fasten their own buttons; to be able to button up their own clothes. In my view, it is something to proud of.”</i></p>

Table 5 Continue

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes - Explanations - Frequencies</i>	<i>Exemplary quote</i>
	<p><i>Observations on the normally developing children</i></p> <p>During the story writing process, all the storywriters read their stories to normally developing students both in pre-school and in primary school regular classes.</p> <p>One student in the class perceived this story as defining his negative attitudes toward students with disabilities and became very upset.</p>	<p>Participants/storywriters expressed that the students:</p> <p><i>"were able to comprehend the stories".</i></p> <p><i>"received the messages of the stories"</i></p> <p><i>"discussed SCD"</i></p> <p><i>"asked why was the main character in the story not able to see?"</i></p> <p><i>"would like to dramatize the game of guiding eyes told in the story"</i></p> <p><i>"entitled one of the stories "Let's Play Guiding Eyes Game"</i></p> <p><i>"the students examined the rabbit in the toy corner, discovered its tail and expressed that rabbits had tails; but the rabbit in this story did not have one, although the rabbit was also able to do good things".</i></p> <p>This normally developing student called the storyteller:</p> <p><i>"a disgusting person".</i></p>
<i>Opinions and Contributions of the Stakeholders</i>	<p>Participant/s</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> shared their story writing process with their friends, families, families of the children with disabilities and received their opinions about writing stories for disabilities (11) expressed that the people around them had positive attitudes toward the idea of writing SCD (11). expressed that one of the people with whom he shared the stories gave a negative opinion (1). 	<p><i>"there was a need for this kind of stories",</i></p> <p><i>"giving ideas about the conclusions of the stories"</i></p> <p><i>"the storybooks should include how children with disabilities learn"</i></p> <p><i>"these kinds of stories provide normally developing children with an awareness of the presence of children with disabilities"</i></p> <p><i>"writing this kind of story is a sensitive behaviour"</i></p> <p><i>"these stories could provide benefits to the teachers of children with disabilities"</i></p> <p><i>"these stories would create consciousness not only in normally developing children but also in teachers, families and other adults."</i></p> <p><i>"there was no need for these kinds of SCD"</i></p>

Table 5 Continue

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes - Explanations - Frequencies</i>	<i>Exemplary quote</i>
<i>Benefits</i>	<p>Personal benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Receiving information in detail about children with disabilities and recognizing these children (7) • Increased in self-confidence due to participating in such a study, resulting in the writing of SCD (5) • Developing empathy towards children with disabilities and also their parents (5) • Learning group work based on collaboration and sharing (4) • Learning the ways of making contributions to ID (2) <p>Professional benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning how to develop materials for normally developing children (4) • Learning the process of story writing (3) • Increased interest in and love of special education profession (2) • Learning how to prepare activities for children with disabilities (2) • Using the written stories in professional life (1) • Developing creative thinking skills (1) <p>Social benefits</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribution to an understanding and acceptance toward children with disabilities in society (11) • Contribution to knowing and acceptance for normally developing children toward children with disabilities (11) • Contribution to self-acceptance of the ID by exploring parts from their own lives in these stories (5) • Providing more information about children with disabilities to families and teachers (4) • Leading story writing focusing on the lives of the peoples with disabilities (2) • Contribution to the positive change of the view points toward special education teachers in society (1) 	<p><i>"I'm attending this faculty four years. I have learned in these workshops collaboration with others."</i></p> <p><i>"I didn't know about developing some materials for normal children."</i></p> <p><i>"People may see those [children with disabilities] on the streets, in their environment and in social settings. In order not to watch in a passive way, primarily something might be told to children at pre-school level by stories, something might be differentiated. This is important for teachers. They might not have encountered a child with disabilities. However, they will be informed thanks to our stories. At the same time, I think it will also make contributions to the families. With the help of these stories, they may understand better their view of life, feelings, what they experienced and felt."</i></p>

Table 5 Continue

<i>Themes</i>	<i>Subthemes - Explanations - Frequencies</i>	<i>Exemplary quote</i>
<i>Writing Process and Problems</i>	<p>All the participants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> expressed that they encountered some problems during the story writing process (11). said that they had a strong need to share the process with classmates, roommates, special education teachers, primary education teachers, student advisors, relatives, colleagues and so on (11). mentioned that there were no difficulties for them in observing children with disabilities, conducting interviews with the families of these children or reading the stories to the normally developing children who were attending regular classes (11). 	<p><i>Problems are</i></p> <p><i>"not having example stories in Turkish literature"(10)</i></p> <p><i>"selecting appropriate word choices and sentence structures according to the level of the children"(3)</i></p> <p><i>"using a comprehensible style for the children to understand better"(2)</i></p> <p><i>"creating the theme of the story"(2)</i></p> <p><i>"writing the introductory sentence for the stories"(2)</i></p> <p><i>"choosing animals as story characters in such a way as to avoid labeling the children"(1)</i></p> <p><i>"difficulty of being empathic"(1)</i></p> <p><i>"creating a story"(1)</i></p>
<i>Suggestions for Story Writers when Writing SCD</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To understand the ID and their families better, the future writer should observe these people and spend their time with them over a long period (11). The future writer should read more stories about children (8). The future writer should build empathy toward the ID and their families (3). The future writer should work with ID (2). The future writer should become familiarized with normally developing children and their development periods (1). The future writer should research the culture and family structures in Turkey (1). The future writer should read and follow scientific publications about ID(1) 	<p><i>"They should recognize closely children with disability and their families"</i></p> <p><i>"They should recognize both normal children and children with disabilities. And they should compare the two groups."</i></p> <p><i>"They will need participant observation, especially with a disabled person and in their life area."</i></p>

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore the experiences of storywriters when creating SCD. Although stories are very important in any educational curriculum, there are no example stories including children with disabilities in Turkish C'sL. As

mentioned by Blaska (2003), the inadequate existence of children with disabilities focuses on the need for more stories that signify the diversity of society including persons with varying abilities. While more storybooks with characters with disabilities are published today in the world, the percentage is still very insufficient when compared to the total number of children's picture books published each year (Blaska, 2003).

Additionally, it is clear that these stories can help children with disabilities to adopt models for themselves and their daily problems. These stories can be useful for normally developing children to understand children with disabilities and for children with disabilities to understand and find themselves. The success of the inclusion depends on the acceptance of the students with disabilities by their peers and their considering themselves as members of their class. When interaction opportunities with peers are provided to students with disabilities, they can also represent appropriate social behaviours, improve their friendships and learn cooperation. At the same time, normally developed students learn that their peers with disabilities are individuals. Moreover, they learn to develop sensitivity toward people who are not exactly similar to themselves and to have social responsibilities due to having peers with disabilities in the classroom environment (Vaughn, Bos & Schumm, 2003; Friend & Bursuck, 2006).

The story writing process was extremely difficult for the storywriters, as there were no example stories, and they had no previous experience of writing storybooks. The storywriters expressed that the story writing process contributed greatly to their gaining more knowledge about children with disabilities. They also indicated that it provided them with the opportunity to better recognize those with disabilities, improve their self-confidence, developing collaboration skills, gain a higher interest in special education as a career and improve their creative thinking abilities. Similar outcomes were obtained as a result of a study on learning through writing stories about students with disabilities in inclusion classes conducted by Jarvis et al. (2004), where it was emphasized that in special education teacher training, writing stories has an important function. Moreover, attitudes, opinions, expectations, feelings and thoughts can be changed by reading storybooks about children with disabilities in Turkey based on making the field of special education better known, developing positive intentions toward ID (Blaska, 2003), encouraging positive interactive relationships among children of different abilities (Gross and Ortiz, 1994), avoiding stereotypes and bias in children's books (Walling, 2001), being supported in a creative and risky process, which could help society have a better view of what professional practice could be (Jarvis et al., 2004), developing insights to explore alternative ways of looking at practice (Chambers, 2003), and providing collection and access to storybooks about integrated early childhood and primary literacy experiences (Williams et al., 2005).

Teachers have a crucial role in providing both positive social interactions between students with disabilities and typical students. They must offer education

about all kinds of differences among individuals, which includes ID (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2004). The curriculum should include the characteristics of ID, regardless of whether the teacher encounters only a few students with disabilities during her/his teaching period. All students should be educated on understanding ID and developing positive attitudes toward all other students (Friend & Bursuck, 2006). While explaining the characteristics of the peers with disabilities to normally developed students, stories will provide significant opportunities for teachers.

In Turkey, it is observed that a lot of people have erroneous and negative attitudes toward ID, since they do not have enough knowledge and experience on the subject. It is thought that SCD may make contributions to eliminate the knowledge deficiency in society.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Questions

1. Could you introduce yourself?
2. What was your aim in joining a study on writing stories for children with disabilities?
3. You scanned the children stories. In the stories you reached, did you encounter any parts from the lives of children with disabilities? Or did you encounter a

story which was completely dedicated to a child with disabilities or her/his parents? What did you think after you scanned these stories?

4. What kind of contributions did the writing a story for children with disabilities workshops make in recognizing individuals with disabilities?
5. What kind of benefits do you think you will receive for your career as a result of this study?
6. In your opinion, what are the benefits of these kinds of stories being on the market for children with disabilities?
7. With whom, except the study group, did you share the information that you wrote stories for children with disabilities? When you shared this information, what kind of reactions did you receive? How did these reactions affect you?
8. What kinds of problems did you come across while writing the stories?
9. What do you suggest to people who will write stories about children with disabilities?

Özel Gereksinimli Çocukları Anlatan Öyküler: Öykü Yazma Süreci ve Öykü Yazarlarının Görüşleri

Atıf:

Vuran, S. (2014). Stories about children with disabilities: the writing process and the opinions of the storywriters. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 55, 137-158. <http://dx.doi.org/10.14689/ejer.2014.55.9>

Özet

Problem Durumu: Dünya'nın pek çok yerinde olduğu gibi Türkiye'de de yasalar okulöncesi dönemden başlayarak özel gereksinimli çocukların akranları ile birlikte normal sınıflarda eğitilmesini öngörmektedir. Özel gereksinimli öğrencilerin normal sınıflarda, akranları ile birlikte gerekli destek hizmetler sunularak eğitilmesine kaynaştırma denilmektedir. Başarılı kaynaştırma sınıfları farklılıkları anlama ve farklılıklara saygı duymaya dayalıdır. Kaynaştırma sınıfındaki öğrencilerin özel gereksinimli akranlarını kabul etmeleri, özelliklerinin farkında olmaları, onlara karşı hoşgörü anlayış ve işbirliği geliştirmeleri kaynaştırmanın başarısını artıracak gibi öğretmenin işini kolaylaştıracaktır. Normal öğrencilerin kaynaştırmaya hazırlanmasında, özel gereksinimli çocukların özelliklerini anlatan resimli ve eğlenceli çocuk öykülerinin, bu bireylere karşı olumlu tutumları artırmak ve farklı yetenekleri olan çocuklar arasındaki olumlu akran ilişkilerini geliştirmek amacıyla kullanılabileceği belirtilmektedir. Türk çocuk alanyazınında, özel gereksinimli

çocuklara ilişkin kaynaklar yoktur. Bu nedenle özel gereksinimli çocukları anlatan kaynaklara gereksinim duyulmuştur.

Çalışmanın Amacı: Bu çalışmada normal öğrencileri kaynaştırmaya hazırlamak üzere özel gereksinimli çocukları anlatan çocuk öyküleri oluşturmak ve bu öykülerin yazarlarının (öğretmen adaylarının) görüşlerini belirlemek amaçlanmıştır.

Yöntem: Eğitim Fakültesi, Özel Eğitim ve Okulöncesi Öğretmenliği Bölümlerinden 12 gönüllü öğretmen adayı öykü yazma çalışmalarının tamamına katılmışlardır. Katılımcıların 7'si özel eğitim öğretmenliği bölümünde, 5'i okul öncesi öğretmenliği bölümündedir. Katılımcıların tamamı özel eğitimle ilgili en az bir ders, altısı çocuk edebiyatı dersleri almışlardır. Bu katılımcıların 11'i gönüllü olarak görüşmelere katılmışlardır. Görüşmelere okul öncesi eğitim bölümünden 5 kişi, özel eğitim öğretmenliği bölümünden 6 kişi katılmıştır. Bu nitel bir çalışmadır. İki evreden oluşmaktadır. İlk evrede özel gereksinimli öğrencilerinin kaynaştırma sınıflarında akranları tarafından kabul edilmelerini kolaylaştırmak üzere özel gereksinimli çocukları anlatan öyküler yazılmıştır. Öykü yazma sürecinde, yedi aylık bir sürede dokuz çalışma toplantısı yapılmıştır. Bunlardan ilkinde, "Katılımcılarla özel gereksinimli çocuklar, kaynaştırma, kaynaştırma sınıflarında neler oluyor?", "Biz kaynaştırma sınıfları için neler yapabiliriz?" konuları tartışılmıştır. Kaynaştırma sınıflarında özel gereksinimli öğrencilerin akranları tarafından kabul edilmemeleri üzerinde odaklanılmıştır. Özel gereksinimli öğrencilerin akranları tarafından kabulünü artırmak için "Neler yapılabilir?" üzerinde tartışılırken, özel gereksinimli çocukların özelliklerini anlatan kitapçıklar yazılması fikri ortaya atılmıştır. Daha sonra bu kitapçıkların, resimli öykü formunda olmasının çocuklar tarafından okunabilirliğini artırabileceği tartışılmış ve öykü kitaplarının yazılmasına karar verilmiştir. Daha sonraki çalışma toplantılarında katılımcılar öykü yazma sürecindeki deneyimlerini ve yazdıkları öyküleri ve gruptaki diğer gönüllü katılımcılarla paylaşmışlardır.

Toplantılar yaklaşık 1,5-2,5 saat sürmüştür. Bu süreçte araştırmacı tarafından 25 sayfalık saha notları tutulmuştur. Toplantıların gündemi üç gün önce belirlenip katılımcılara e-posta ve duvar ilanları aracılığıyla duyurulmuş ve ilk toplantı yazar tarafından yürütülmüştür. İzleyen toplantılar katılımcılardan biri tarafından yürütülmüştür. Her toplantının sonunda gelecek toplantının gündemine karar verilmiştir.

Toplantılarda 18 öykü yazılmıştır. Öykülerin tamamı özel gereksinimli bireylerin yaşadıkları sorunları içermekle birlikte, sorunların çözümünde ve çözümüyle birlikte ortaya çıkan olumlu yaşantıları dile getirmiştir. Tüm öykülerde özel gereksinimli olan ve olmayan bireyler arasında hoşgörü, işbirliği ve farklılıklara saygı temaları işlenmiştir. Bu öykülerin isimleri;

- Ömer'in Hayali
- Bayram Hediyesi
- Güzel Mavi Gözler
- Küçük Cıvcıv
- Anne Gökkuşığı Ne Demek?
- Zeynep Öğretmen
- Okul Sevinci
- Ahmet ve Arkadaşları
- Sihirli Tüy
- Özgür'ün Dünyası
- En İyi Arkadaşlıklar
- Gökkuşığı
- Bir de Siz Deneyin
- Hayat Güzel
- Doğum Günü Hediyesi
- Üç Ayaklı Kahraman
- Ponpon Kuyruğu Olmayan Tavşan
- Haydi Gören Rehber Oyunu Oynayalım
- Benim Kanatlarım: İki Küçük Şahin

İkinci evrede özel gereksinimli çocukları anlatan öykülerin yazarlarının, öykü yazma sürecinde deneyimlerini ve beklentilerini incelemek amaçlanmıştır. Bu aşamada öykü yazma sürecine katılan öğretmen adayları ile süreçteki deneyimlerini paylaşmak amacıyla yaklaşık 20'er dakikalık yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Tüm görüşmelerin yazılı dökümleri yazar tarafından yapılmış ve ses kayıtları alanda çalışan bir başka araştırmacı tarafından dinlenerek doğrulanmıştır. Görüşmelerin dökümleri iki kopya olarak hazırlanmıştır. Dökümler araştırmacı ve bir başka uzman tarafından bağımsız olarak analiz edilmiştir. Bu süreçte ana ve alt temalar oluşturulmuştur. Bu temalar karşılaştırılarak uzlaşma sağlanmıştır. Üçüncü bir uzman tarafından temalar gözden geçirilerek yedi ana tema oluşturulmuştur. Sonuç olarak toplantılardaki saha notları dikkate alındığında alt temalar çeşitlendirilerek veri analizinin güvenilirliği ve inanırlığı sağlanmıştır.

Sonuçlar: Araştırma bulgularına göre Türk çocuk öyküleri literatüründe öykü yazarları için örnek oluşturabilecek özel gereksinimli çocukları anlatan öykülere rastlanmamıştır. Bu yüzden öykü yazma süreci, yazarlar için oldukça zorlayıcı

olmuştur. Araştırma bulguları bu sürecin öğretmen adaylarının bireysel ve mesleki gelişimine katkıda bulunduğu, özel gereksinimli çocukları anlatan öykülerin özel gereksinimli çocukların sosyal kabulünü artırdığına ilişkin olumlu deneyimler kazandırdığını göstermektedir.

Tartışma ve Öneriler: Türk toplumundaki pek çok kişi özel gereksinimli çocuklara ilişkin yeterli bilgi ve deneyimleri olmadığı için onlar hakkında yanlış ve dolayısıyla olumsuz tutumlara sahip olabilmektedir. Bu yüzden de toplumda özel gereksinimli çocukların kabulü ile ilgili sorunlar devam etmektedir. Özel gereksinimli çocukları anlatan öykülerin toplumdaki bilgi eksikliğini kapatmaya bir ölçüde katkıda bulunacağı düşünülmektedir. Kaynaştırma sınıflarında, özel gereksinimli çocukları anlatan öykülerin kullanılmasının, özel gereksinimli olan ve olmayan çocuklar, öğretmenleri ve ailelerine olumlu katkılar sağlayacağı söylenebilir ve başka araştırmalarla desteklenebilir.

Özel gereksinimli çocuklar hakkında öykü kitaplarının gerek okulöncesi gerekse ilköğretim döneminde okutulması bu çocuklara/bireylere karşı tutumları, beklentileri, düşünceleri değiştirebilir. Farklı yetenekleri olan çocuklar arasında etkileşimleri cesaretlendirebilir. Bu çocuklar büyüdüklerinde de onların bu hoşgörülü tutumları toplumun özel gereksinimli bireylere olumlu bakış açısına katkıda bulunabilir. Bu öykülerin tutum değişikliğine neden olup olmadığı araştırılabilir.