



## Picture in Children's Story Books: Children's Perspective

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**Abstract:** The aim of this study is to collect and analyze children's comments on the pictures in children's story books. Four students studied in the first grade of a public primary school in Adana participated in the study. The research model is an example of phenomenology among qualitative research patterns. Focus group method was used as the data collection tool and observation method was used in a second exercise to support the first method. In focus group discussion "The City on the Wind" by Behic Ak, selected as the Book 1, was reviewed along with 4 participating students. In the second exercise, the book named "The Little Match Girl" selected as Book 2 was reviewed. Descriptive analysis and document analysis methods were used in the analysis of the research data. Students' comments on the pictures were collected under four different themes. "Description" among these themes was the most common in student expressions. The sentences for the themes of superficial interpretation, imaginative interpretation and critical understanding were less frequently used by students. Another finding of the study is the number of words students used to describe the picture. Students built short sentences not exceeding 2-3 words.

**Keywords:** *Interpreting, visual reading, picture story books.*

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### Introduction

The paintings in children's story books, created based on artist sensitivity and child reality, enrich children's emotional and cognitive capacity with visual stimuli from early childhood; can help them develop their affective, cognitive, and linguistic skills. In children's books, illustrations can be an aesthetic stimulus which creates meaning and explains meaning when thought together with the text, as well as fulfilling an important role as a visual element (Sever, 2012). When children encounter illustrations, they attribute new meanings to them in their own world. As children discover illustrations in books, they form an awareness of the literary work and the elements in them, and they attain deeper meaning from the books (Galda & Short, 1993; van Kraayenoord & Paris, 1996).

Experiences are needed so that children can make meaning in context with the pictures in the books (van Kraayenoord & Paris, 1996). Activities such as reading or telling story-telling stories, playing word games, dreaming and these dreams pour into words help children understand the world they are in realistically and originally (Pearson, 1993). Thanks to these experiences, it contributes to the development of children's creative and original thinking skills. Besides in the course of these experiences children develop new meanings together with other children whom they share the environment, and they contribute to the culture of the environment they are in and learn the culture of the environment (Rogoff, 1990).

One of the most basic tools contributing to children's development and learning is illustrated children's books (Gangi, 2004; Karweit, 1989; Kiefer, Hepler & Hickman, 2007; Young, Hadaway & Ward, 2013) Illustrated children's books come at a time when children's development to the world is most intense and they are beginning to develop basic skills that they will use in the future. These books contribute to the children's language and cognitive developments, as well as their readiness to the school (Sever, 2012). For this reason, there is a need for books that are prepared with quality and artist sensitivity in order to give children reading habits and enjoyment. There are studies that show that children need to interact with illustrated children's books from an early age so that creativity may develop / develop in the child, intellectual and artistic consciousness can be formed (Gangi, 2004; McCannon, Thornton & Williams, 2008).

Known for his research on language development, Vygotsky emphasizes that language develops parallel to thought (Bodrova & Leong, 2013). According to Vygotsky, the word goes to the structure of the object and thus acquires a functional meaning. At the same time, Vygotsky says that the language environment in which the child lives is

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influencing the level of thinking. For this reason, it is emphasized that verbal thinking can be understood by examining the stages of the child's underdeveloped, partial, primitive language. Jean Piaget, who has made important studies in the field of cognitive development, has argued that the development of thought and language in children occurs not through a continuum but through stages and that the individual is made effective in environmental relations (Wadsworth, 1996). According to Piaget, cognitive development is in the first place. Language development is a coordination of general cognitive changes and cognitive development is not affected by language. In this context, Vygotsky emphasizes that language influences thought, while Piaget emphasizes experience. Both learning theories need contexts in which an individual can reason and make meaning in order to be able to develop cognitively. Arnheim (1986) states that seeing is an active function of the mind whereas perception is a cognitive event; ultimately emphasizes that interpretation and meaning are integral parts of the act of seeing. This experience is much more efficient for the individual experiencing pictorial products. It needs to be stimulated both intuitively and cognitively in order for the mind to function fully. In this context, painting offers an excellent opportunity for education. This allows the individual to see not only the parts but also the whole (Arnheim, 1986).

The pictures in the children's story books contribute to the child's language development as well as the creativity, intellectual and artistic development in the child. In the age of primary school age (6-8 years), children show features such as being able to build their sentences in different ways, using conjuncts in their sentences, clues in the picture, and understanding some abstract expressions. In this context, it is necessary to interact more with children's picture books prepared with artist sensitivity in order to contribute to children's linguistic development (Alderson, 2000; Bamberger, 1990: 39; Feinstein & Hagerty, 1994).

It shows that children are starting to learn to think about building a relationship between what they hear and what they see. Especially in children who have just started reading, the pictures in the books will help to do that. The children who meet the pictures in the book will be found in meaning and interpretations within the framework of the experiences he has lived up to that day. The culture the individual is trained plays a decisive role in the interpretation of the point of view from various pictorial items, and the realities involved in the individual's life, in his formal meaning and interpretation (Arizpe & Styles, 2003). When children meet picture books, these processes start to work. The children comment on the pictures they see in the books in the context of their experience, in other words they see, hear and live. Arnheim (1986) defines this process as perceptual intuition and this phenomenon means that we have discovered the world in our circle and are the basic building block of our understanding.

The child is able to perceive and express new meanings with the speaking language. In this context, it is concluded that the process of understanding speech language is related to the facts and concepts in long term memory. In order for this association to occur, children should be able to use language skills in enriched settings. In this context, language plays an important role in the development of cognitive processes.

Researches on the study of the story books of the illustrated children emphasize that the illustrated story books contribute to the cognitive and linguistic development of children and therefore the developmental levels of children in this area should be determined (Champion, Hyter, McCabe & Bland-Stewart; 2014; Maynard, Pullen & Coyne, 2010; Reese, Suggate, Long & Schauthency, 2010; Tompkins, Guo & Justice, 2012; Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimonti & Kaderavek, 2013; Woolley & Cox, 2007). Sackes, Trundle and Flevares (2009) appeared that well-written pictorial story books in accordance with the child's developmental level support the development of children's scientific process skills. Yazzie (2009) has determined a strong positive correlation between visual-spatial reasoning and academic achievement in children aged eight to twelve years. Zucker, Cabell, Justice, Pentimonti and Kaderavek (2013) appeared that the activities of reading story books in preschool classes had an effect on language development and early literacy skills as children passed to first grade. Tompkins, Guo and Justice (2012) determined be effect on language development skills activities that made picture story book reading and story-building with children together. Maynard, Pullen and Coyne (2010) appeared that the storytelling activities of the picture fed the vocabulary of children learned the meaning of the words more easily in the text and these activities enriched the language development of children.

Studies show that children's reaction to the pictures in the books reflect a very complex process and that reading, understanding and interpreting pictures is at least as difficult as literacy (Arizpe & Styles, 2003; Walsh, 2003). In addition, experts in this field also stated that reading a picture is a much different process than read a writing (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996; Lewis, 2001; Nikolajeva & Scott, 2000; Walsh, 2003). Children need to be trained in this subject in order to be able to use the pictures in the textbooks and storybooks in a meaningful way during the learning-teaching process. There are studies show that children's story books contribute to the teaching of concepts (Broepmmel & Rearden, 2006; Zeece, 1999), development of cognitive, affective and linguistic skills (Bamberger, 1990: 39; Brewer, 2001; Derson, 2000; Feinstein & Hagerty, 1994; Gangi, 2004; Karweit, 1989; Kiefer, Hepler, Hickman, 2007; Kobayashi, 2009; Smyth, 2005; Young, Hadaway & Ward, 2013). However, there were a limited number of national studies (Koc, Yildiz & Coskun, 2015) that examined students' comments on the pictures in children's story books and evaluated their cognitive and linguistic development in line with these interpretations and there was determined a need for studies in this field. In line with this need, the aim of the study is to determine the students' interpretations and to evaluate their interpretations. In this aim context, it is thought that this study will contribute to the evaluation of the comments made by the students, to understand their level of development and to be a guide for the educational programs that can be prepared.

## Methodology

### *Research Goal*

The purpose of our study in this context is to collect and analyze students' interpretations of the pictures in the children's story books. For this purpose, the following questions were asked:

1. How are the pictures in the children's books for primary school students interpreted by the students?
2. How do Book 1 (City on the Wind) and Book 2 (The Little Match Girl) rate in terms of the physical characteristics a child's book should possess?
3. How do Book 1 (City on the Wind) and Book 2 (The Little Match Girl) rate in terms of the illustrative characteristics a child's book should possess?

### *Research Model*

The research model is an example of phenomenology among qualitative research patterns. The purpose of the phenomenology studies is to reveal the experiences and perceptions of the individuals towards a certain phenomenon, and the meanings they ascribe to the phenomenon. The phenomena can appear in our lives in various ways, such as perceptions, concepts, experiences in our world (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenon studied in this research is the pictures in the children's story books. The interpretations that children bring to these paintings are their perspective.

### *Study Group (Participants)*

Four students studied in the first grade of a public primary school in Adana province of Turkey participated in the study. The reason for choosing the first grade is that the students have not yet learned to read. Because, in the activities, students are asked to examine the pictures. To select the participants, easily accessible sampling method was preferred among purposeful sampling methods. In the selection of the students, the opinion of the classroom teacher was consulted. The study was conducted with 4 students nominated by the classroom teacher. Selected students comprise 2 girls and 2 boys. All four of the students received pre-school education. The students are 7 years old.

### *Data Collection Tools*

Focus group discussion was used as the data collection tool in the study and a second exercise was conducted to support this method. In the second exercise, the teacher has repeated the researcher's practice in the class. The researcher is role the participant as an observer (Creswell, 2016) in this process. Therefore, the observation method was used as a second data collection tool. Students' comments about the pictures were determined by using observation form. The themes and the codes by which the four students commented on the pictures in the story book were rated. The use of data obtained by different researchers and methods (diversification) to confirm each other increases the reliability and validity of the results obtained (Quinn, 2014). "The City on the Wind" book by Behic Ak, selected as the Book 1 in focus group discussion, was reviewed together with 4 participating students. In the second exercise, the book named "The Little Match Girl" selected as Book 2 was reviewed. In addition to the diversification of data collection tools, diversification of researchers has also been achieved. The researcher took part in the review of Book 1. In the review of Book 2, the classroom teacher took part and the researcher made observations of the 4 participating students.

Another data collection tool of the research is the document analysis. A checklist developed by the researchers was used to evaluate the physical and illustrative characteristics of the "The City on the Wind" and "The Little Match Girl" books. A checklist has been created by determining the physical and illustrative characteristics that pictures in the children's books should have it. When constructing the check list, it's final version was produced by consulting experts' opinion following a survey of domestic and international literature (Bas & Inan Yildiz, 2014; Danko-McGhee & Slutsky, 2011; Gonen, Karakus, Uysal, Kehci, Ulutas & Kahve, 2016; Gonen, Uludag, Findik Tanribuyurdu & Tufekci, 2014).

### *Data Collection Process*

Focus group discussion was used as the data collection tool in the study and a second exercise was conducted to support this method. The observation method was used as a second data collection tool. Another data collection tool of the research is the document analysis. The data collection process is summarized in table 1:

Table 1. Data Collection Process

Exercise	Goal	Data Collection Tools
1.Exercise	Interpretations of the pictures in the children's story books	Focus Group Discussion
2. Exercise	Interpretations of the pictures in the children's story books	Observation
3. Exercise	Evaluate the physical and illustrative characteristics of the "The City on the Wind" and "The Little Match Girl" books.	Document Analysis

### Focus Group Discussion

After obtaining the necessary permissions for the application, the classroom teacher was informed about the study. The classroom teacher selected the students on a volunteering basis.

The classroom teacher introduced the researcher to the class and explained the study. The reason giving information about the study is to satisfy the students curiosity and to make them feel comfortable. During a class period appointed by the classroom teacher, the four participating students were taken out of the classroom and the exercise was conducted in the teachers' lounge of the school. The application took about 60 minutes.

The children were told that this was not a lesson or exam and that they could say whatever they wished. The fact that a voice recording will be made and the purpose of recording was explained to the children. After necessary explanations the exercise was commenced.

The researcher said to the students; "I will ask you some questions about this book. Would you like to examine the book? Then we will explore the pictures." The student were told that they can examine the book however wished and the students examined the book. With this, the aim was for the students to get the feeling of the book and to have an idea about the book.



Picture 1. Little Match Girl-Hans Christian Andersen Picture 2. The City on the Wind- Behic Ak

After they examined the book, every picture was shown to the children and reviewed one by one. The students were asked questions such as; "What do you see in the pictures?", "What do you think is happening in the pictures?" The students were further encouraged to speak when they said "That's it.". The students were encouraged by saying; "Is there anything else you can say?," "Other?," "Why?," "You can talk as long as you like, you can say anything you wish". In this process, students' picture readings time took about 5 minutes.

### 2. Exercise

In order to eliminate negative factors such as the students not feeling comfortable around the researcher or not speaking their minds freely, a second exercise was held. To diversify the practitioners, the second exercise was held in the classroom environment by the classroom teacher. The researcher, observed how the four students who previously participated in focus group discussion interpreted the pictures in Book 2.

The researcher went in the classroom together with the classroom teacher. There were a total of 15 students in the classroom. The researcher sat in the back row unobtrusively. Necessary notes were taken and the exercise was recorded while the classroom teacher facilitated the exercise.

The classroom teacher showed the book to the students and said "we are going to do a small exercise with you before we start with the lesson". After this, pictures on each page were reviewed by the students. The students gave their

comments on the pictures one by one. Even though 15 students commented on the pictures in the book, only the four students' comments were observed and noted down. The themes and the codes by which the four students commented on the pictures in the story book were rated.

#### *Analyzing of Data*

Descriptive analysis method was used in the analysis of the research data. In the descriptive analysis method, the collected data are organized and interpreted according to the previously determined themes (Miles & Huberman, 2016).

The researcher listened to and transcribed the students' statements on the pictures in the book. Each sentence the students voiced on the pictures in the book was analyzed by descriptive analysis method. Each expression with a verb was considered a sentence. After examining the sentences, they were organized into to pre-determined themes. The themes were constructed based on the works of Arizpe and Styles (2003) and Koc, Yildiz and Coskun (2015) were given their final form following a review with regard to the obtained data. The codes were determined by the researcher and listed under the relevant themes. Frequency and percentage values were also considered when examining the themes and codes. The obtained data were arranged in tables and also quotes directly from the comments of the students on the pictures were expressed in quotation marks.

The analysis of the second exercise was made by creating an observation form based on the codes and themes determined by the descriptive analysis method. The themes and the codes by which the four students commented on the pictures in the story book were rated with the scale of very often, often, seldom and never, on the observation form. Comments compiled from the discussion group and the 2<sup>nd</sup> exercise are consistent and similar.

For the books used in the application process, document analysis was done based on physical and illustrative characteristics. After the checklist which was the analysis unit was prepared the document analysis was made with the aid of quantification method such as present/not present (Miles and Huberman, 2016). In this process, researchers was made evaluations together. After the evaluation, the document analysis process was completed by applying expert opinion in this field.

### **Findings**

This section includes findings on how primary school students interpret the pictures in Book 1 and Book 2, and the physical and illustrative characteristics of the books used in the application process.

#### *Findings on How Do the Primary School Students Interpret the Pictures in Book 1*

As a result of the discussion, students formed a total of 71 sentences about the pictures. The length of the sentences was limited to 2-3 words. The students' sentences were collected under four different themes. These themes and the distribution of sentences under these are as follows:

*Table 2. Sentence distribution by themes*

<b>Themes</b>	<b>f</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Description	54	76.05
Superficial Interpretation	8	11.26
Imaginative Interpretation	5	7.04
Critical Understanding	4	5.63
<b>Totals</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>100</b>

When Table 2 is examined, the majority (76.05%) of the sentences built by the students belonged to the "Description" theme. Under the theme of description; "Concrete Object Description, Living Being Description, Action Description" codes are included. 11.26% of the sentences voiced by the students belonged to the theme of "Superficial Interpretation". Under the theme of superficial interpretation, "Superficial Interpretation of the Situation, Exaggerated Superficial Interpretation, Superficial Interpretation of Basic Life Necessities" codes are included. 7.04% of the sentences belonged to the theme of "Imaginative Interpretation". The theme of imaginative interpretation is composed of "Imaginative Interpretation of Characters, Imaginative Interpretation of Special Days, Imaginative Interpretation of Basic Life Necessities" codes. 5.63% of the sentences belong to the theme of "Critical understanding". Critical understanding is composed of "Critical Understanding of Situation" and "Exaggerated Critical Understanding of Situation" codes.

Since the codes were thought to give more information about student opinions, a table was also created for the codes. Below is the table for this.

Table 3. Sentence distribution by codes

Themes	Codes	f
Description	Concrete Object Description	6
	Living Being Description	12
	Action Description	36
Superficial Interpretation	Superficial Interpretation of Situation	4
	Exaggerated Superficial Interpretation	2
	Superficial Interpretation of Basic Living Necessities	2
Imaginative Interpretation	Imaginative Interpretation of Characters	1
	Imaginative Interpretation of Special Days	1
	Imaginative Interpretation of Basic Living Necessities	3
Critical Understanding	Critical Understanding of Situation	3
	Exaggerated Critical Understanding of Situation	1

When Table 3 is examined, the vast majority of students sentences (f: 36) belong to the "description of action" code from the "Description" theme. In the theme of superficial interpretation, the majority of the sentences belong to "superficial interpretation of the situation" (f: 4) code. In the theme of imaginative interpretation, the sentences generally belong to the code "imaginative interpretation of basic life necessities" (f: 3). In the theme of critical understanding, three of the four sentences belong to the "critical understanding of situation" code.

#### *Findings on Description and Sub Codes*

Description theme comprises sentences with which the children only name what they see in the picture, in other words an as is expression of the visuals in the picture. In these expressions there is no interpretation, only the naming of the object or figure seen in the picture and the description of its physical properties.

76% of the sentences formed by the students belong to the theme of description. Of the 71 sentences, 54 are description sentences. For example; in the first spread (page pair) of the book, there is a picture of people working happily cooperating with each other. When students looked at the picture on the mentioned spread they said the following sentences: "There is a house.", "There are trees.", "There are people.", "People are working.", "There is a donkey."

When we examine the sentences under description codes, 36 of the 54 sentences were belonged to the "Action Description", 12 of them belonged "Living Being Description" and 6 of them belonged to "Concrete Objects Description". The vast majority of the description theme consists of "Action Definition" sentences. For example; on the ninth spread of the book; people are flying in the air and doing their daily chores. When students looked at the picture on this spread they expressed the following sentences related to the codes derived from the themes. The "There is a staircase." sentence is related to the "Concrete Object Description" code. "There is a stork." sentence is related to the "Living Being Description" code. The sentence "People are toasting bread inside a tornado." is related to the "Action Description" code.

#### *Findings on Superficial Interpretation and Sub Codes*

The theme of superficial interpretation includes the evaluation of the clues present in the picture and some basic explanations. In such interpretations there is a reflection of how the composition in the picture is perceived. These sentences are based on the evaluation of the explicit clues in the picture. No additional comments beyond the clues given in the picture were made.

11% of the sentences belong to the theme of superficial interpretation. 8 out of 71 sentences were in the form of superficial interpretation. For example; on the second spread of the book; there is a picture of people flying with fear in a strong wind. When students looked at the picture on the spread they formed the following sentences: "The wind is very violent.", "People are scared."

When we examine the sentences formed related to the superficial interpretation theme codes, of the total of 8 sentences, 4 are of Superficial Interpretation of the Situation, 2 are of Exaggerated Superficial Interpretation of the Situation, and 2 are of Superficial Interpretation of Basic Living Necessities. The majority of the Superficial Interpretation theme consists of "Superficial Interpretation of Situation" expressions. For example; on the twelfth spread of the book; people are curiously looking up and the animals appear to be thirsty. When students looked at the picture on this spread they expressed the following sentences related to the codes derived from the themes. "People are curiously looking up." sentence is related to the code "Superficial Interpretation of Situation". The phrase "The air is very hot in the dessert." is related to the code "Exaggerated Superficial Interpretation of Situation". "The animals are thirsty." sentence is related to the code "Superficial Interpretation of Basic Living Necessities".

#### *Findings on Imaginative Interpretation and Sub Codes*

The theme of imaginative interpretation comprises statements arising from the reflections of the child's imagination. The child is assisted by his/her imagination when interpreting and explaining the people, objects and events he/she

sees in the picture beyond the clues given in the picture. These are the sentences that the student forms in his/her imagination without explicit clues.

Seven percent of the sentences formed by the students belong to the imaginative interpretation theme. The 5 sentences out of 71 sentences are of the imaginative interpretation. For example; on the sixth spread of the book an old granny and a grandfather are pictured to be flying on the carpet. When one of the students looked at the picture on the spread, he/she formed the following sentence. *"A witch is flying."* This sentence reflects the fantasies of his/her own imagination beyond what is seen in the picture.

When we examine the sentences related to the codes derived from the theme of imaginative interpretation; of the total of 5 sentences, 3 of them belong to "Imaginative Interpretation of Basic Living Necessities" code, 1 belongs to "Imaginative Interpretation of Special Days" code and 1 belongs to "Imaginative Interpretation of Characters" code. The majority of imaginative interpretation sentences are of "Imaginative Interpretation of Basic Living Necessities" code.

For example; on the sixth spread of the book, people are celebrating, old granny and grandfather are flying on the carpet and the people above give presents to the people below. When students looked at the picture on the spread they said the following sentences with regard to the codes derived from the themes. The "There is a witch" sentence is related to the "Imaginative Interpretation of Characters" code. "People play drums because it's a festive day today." is related to the "Imaginative Interpretation of Special Days" code. "They give presents to help people." sentence is related to the "Imaginative Interpretation of Basic Living Necessities" code.

As the "Teacher's Day Celebration" was held on the day the exercise was held, the student associated the celebration on the sixth spread of the book with the Teacher's Day. According to him, people in the picture think like himself. The expressions of the students gathered under this theme are imaginative and reflect the student's own inner world.

#### *Findings on Critical Understanding and Sub-codes*

Critical understanding theme comprises sentences ascribing meaning to the pictures in the book and expressing their opinions about acceptable/not acceptable behavior in relation to these meanings.

Of the 71 sentences formed by the students 4 are the critical understanding sentences. For example; on the twelfth spread of the book; the people above give water to the following people. One of the students, after looking at the picture on the specified spread, said the following sentence. *"They are happy because they give water to the people in the desert. Because helping makes people happy. It brings them closer together. They become friends."*

Three (3) of the 4 sentences the students formed under Critical Understanding theme belong to "Critical Understanding of Situation" and 1 sentence belongs to "Exaggerated Critical Understanding of Situation". The majority of critical understanding themes consist of "Critical Understanding of Situation" sentences. For example; in the picture on the eleventh spread of the book, people are giving out fruit. The student has formed the following sentence regarding the codes derived from the themes when looking at the picture on the spread. *"They are distributing the healthiest fruits to people. Because eating fruit is very important for human health."* The sentence is related to the "Exaggerated Critical Understanding of Situation" code.

For example; on the first spread of the book; people are working happily. When one of the students looked at the picture on the spread, he/she formed the following sentence. *"People are happy. Because it's good to work. People get happy when they work" this sentence is related to the "Critical Understanding of Situation" code.*

#### *Findings on How Do the Primary School Students Interpret the Pictures in Book 2*

Table 4. Observation form

Themes	Code	Observing frequency			
		Frequently	Often	Rarely	Never
Description	Concrete Object Description	✓			
	Living Being Description	✓			
	Action Description	✓			
Superficial Interpretation	Superficial Interpretation of Situation		✓		
	Exaggerated Superficial Interpretation of Situation				✓
	Superficial Interpretation of Basic Living Necessities		✓		
Imaginative Interpretation	Imaginative Interpretation of Basic Living Necessities			✓	
	Imaginative Interpretation of Characters				✓
	Imaginative Interpretation of Special Days				✓
Critical Understanding	Critical Understanding of Situation			✓	
	Exaggerated Critical Understanding of Situation				✓

When Table 4 is examined, the vast majority of the sentences formed by the students belong to the Description theme as in the focus group discussion analysis. Following the description theme, majority of the remaining sentences belong to superficial interpretation theme. The sentences under the superficial interpretation theme are mostly related to

"superficial interpretation of the situation" and the "superficial interpretation of basic living necessities" code. The sentences in the "imaginative interpretation" and "critical understanding" themes were rarely or never used by the students.

*Findings on the Physical Properties of the Books "The City on the Wind (Book 1)" and "The Little Match Girl (Book 2)"*

With regard to the physical characteristics of the books used in the research process, the quality of the properties of the book such as book measurements, binding structure, paper type, cover structure, number of pages, volume, cover, page layout, cover illustration were assessed. Findings on the assessment are given in Table 5 and Table 6.

*Table 5. Distribution of physical characteristics of the book named City on the Wind (Book 1)*

<b>Physical Characteristics</b>	<b>Observed</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
The size of the book is large.	✓	
Coated paper has been used for the book pages.	✓	
White paper has been used for the book pages.	✓	
The book is light weight.	✓	
The book binding is stitched.	✓	
The words are printed in 14 pt.	✓	
Different size and typeface fonts are used for the words in the book.		✓
The book cover is in accord with the subject of the book.	✓	
The book cover is durable.	✓	
The book cover has a creative and attractive design.	✓	
The book title is printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The names of the author/translator are printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The illustrator's name is printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The publisher's name is printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The place of publication is printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The year of publication is printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The age group indicating the target group is printed on the book.		✓
The book is made of parts which can be teared out or can be swallowed.		✓
The book pages have sharp edges.		✓
The book has an introductory back cover text.	✓	
The text and words start at the same line (left margin).		✓
The text has normal line spacing.	✓	

When Table 5 is examined, it is observed that the size of the book "City on the Wind" is big, coated white paper has been used, it is light weight and the binding is stitched type, type fonts are 14 pt. or larger, the book cover is attractive and sturdy, the information on the front, inside and back is complete, the book pages do not have sharp edges, and the words and text in the book start in the same level and have normal line spacing.

*Table 6. Distribution of physical characteristics of the book named the Little Match Girl (Book 2)*

<b>Physical Characteristics</b>	<b>Observed</b>	<b>Not Observed</b>
Having a large size	✓	
The size of the book is large.	✓	
Coated paper has been used for the book pages.	✓	
White paper has been used for the book pages.	✓	
The book is light weight.	✓	
The book binding is stitched.	✓	
The words are printed in 14 pt.		✓
Different size and typeface fonts are used for the words in the book.	✓	
The book cover is in accord with the subject of the book.	✓	
The book cover is durable.	✓	
The book cover has a creative and attractive design.	✓	
The book title is printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The names of the author/translator are printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The illustrator's name is printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The publisher's name is printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The place of publication is printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.	✓	
The year of publication is printed on the front cover, inner page or back cover.		✓
The age group indicating the target group is printed on the book.		✓

Table 6. Continued

Physical Characteristics	Observed	Not Observed
The book is made of parts which can be teared out or can be swallowed.		✓
The book pages have sharp edges.		✓
The book has an introductory back cover text.	✓	
The text and words start at the same line (left margin).	✓	
The text has normal line spacing.	✓	

When Table 6 is examined, it is observed that the size of the book "City on the Wind" is big, coated white paper has been used, it is light weight and the binding is stitched type, type fonts are 14 pt. or larger, the book cover is attractive and sturdy, the information on the front, inside and back is complete, the book pages do not have sharp edges, and the words and text in the book start in the same line-level and have normal line spacing.

*Findings on the Illustrative Characteristics of the Books "The City on the Wind (Book 1)" and "The Little Match Girl (Book 2)"*

With regard to the illustrative characteristics of the books used in the research process, the quality of the properties of the pictures and the picture-text relationship has been assessed. Findings on the assessment are given in Table 7 and Table 8.

Table 7. Distribution of illustrative characteristics of the book named City on the Wind (Book 1)

Illustrative Characteristics	Observed	Not Observed
The picture in the front cover of the book is related to the subject of the book.	✓	
In the book, $\frac{1}{4}$ of the page layout is text and $\frac{3}{4}$ of it is illustration.	✓	
The illustrations in the book are in color.	✓	
The illustrations are placed on the same page(s) as the text or words they are depicting.	✓	
The lines in the illustrations are clear.		✓
The illustrations are animated and have a strong story-telling quality.	✓	
The illustrations in the book are explaining what is being told in the text or words.	✓	
The illustrations in the book are realistic and concrete.	✓	
The illustration on the book cover is interesting.	✓	
The illustrations in the book have frames.		✓
The illustrations are suitable for the contents of the text.	✓	
The illustrations are suitable for the subject of the book and are comprehensible.	✓	
The illustrations can depict the subject of the book.	✓	
The illustrations are related with the text they are on the same page with.	✓	
The illustrations are thought-provoking and interpretative.	✓	
The illustrations are entertaining.	✓	
The illustration technique is coherent and consistent throughout the book.	✓	

When Table 7 is examined, the pictures in the book "The City on the Wind" are colorful, engaging, concrete, entertaining and interperive; the illustrations are related to the subject and the text.

Table 8. Distribution of illustrative characteristics of the book named the Little Match Girl (Book 2)

Illustrative Characteristics	Observed	Not Observed
The picture in the front cover of the book is related to the subject of the book.	✓	
The picture in the front cover of the book is related to the subject of the book.		✓
In the book, $\frac{1}{4}$ of the page layout is text and $\frac{3}{4}$ of it is illustration.	✓	
The illustrations in the book are in color.	✓	
The illustrations are placed on the same page(s) as the text or words they are depicting.		✓
The lines in the illustrations are clear.	✓	
The illustrations are animated and have a strong story-telling quality.	✓	
The illustrations in the book are explaining what is being told in the text or words.	✓	
The illustrations in the book are realistic and concrete.	✓	
The illustration on the book cover is interesting.	✓	
The illustrations in the book have frames.	✓	
The illustrations are suitable for the contents of the text.	✓	
The illustrations are suitable for the subject of the book and are comprehensible.	✓	
The illustrations can depict the subject of the book.	✓	
The illustrations are related with the text they are on the same page with.	✓	
The illustrations are thought-provoking and interpretative.	✓	
The illustrations are entertaining.	✓	
The illustration technique is coherent and consistent throughout the book.	✓	

When Table 8 is examined, the pictures in the book "The City on the Wind" are colorful, engaging, concrete, entertaining and interpretive; the illustrations are related to the subject and the text.

### Discussion

In this research, aiming to collect and analyze the comments of the students for the pictures in the children's story books, the students' comments on the pictures were collected under four different themes. "Description" among these themes was the most common in student expressions. The students often expressed what they saw in the picture as is and without any personal comments. The sentences for the themes of superficial interpretation, imaginative interpretation and critical understanding were less frequently used by students. The fact that the majority of the student sentences belong to the description theme can be explained by the fact that the students, in their education experiences, don't encounter different situations or problems where they will have to develop high-level thinking skills such as creative thinking, reasoning, and critical thinking for their solution. However, in the early childhood and primary school education program, it is aimed to plan the educational environment in such a way as to support the students' problem solving skills and creativity with the aims and practices supporting the creative thinking skills of the students. (Republic of Turkey Ministry of National Education [MEB], 2017). In this context, it is considered that the teacher's influence will play an important role in the development of the students' skills and in the implementation phase of the program.

In terms of superficial interpretation; students ascribed meaning to the images by looking at the clues in the picture. They did not make any comment beyond the obvious clues. They interpreted the clues in the picture as they perceived it. In the theme of imaginative interpretation; the sentences created by the students reflect the fantasies of their imagination beyond what is shown in the picture. As the "Teacher's Day Celebration" was held on the day the exercise was held, the student associated the celebration on the sixth spread of the book with the Teacher's Day. According to him, people in the picture think like himself. The expressions of the students gathered under this theme are imaginative and reflect the student's own inner world. For example; on the twelfth spread of the book; the people above give water to the following people. One of the students, after looking at the picture on the specified spread, said the following sentence. *"They are happy because they give water to the people in the desert. Because helping makes people happy. It brings them closer together. They become friends."* In fact, with this sentence the student emphasizes the importance of cooperation. These results obtained in our study are similar to the results of the research by Koc, Yildiz and Coskun (2015).

According to Piaget, since the students in this age group are in the concrete operations phase, they are not just stuck in the images of objects and events; they begin to think about things they don't see, based on what they see (Inferred Reality). In this study sentences related with inferred reality under the themes of imaginative interpretation and critical thinking were observed less frequently among the student expressions. Students' expressions about the pictures are mostly in the form of expressions involving knowledge and understanding, that is, lower level thinking skills. However, children in this age group have the ability to easily find critical comments (Davies, 1999). Piaget emphasized that one of the important factors affecting cognitive development is experience (Ahioglu-Lindberg, 2011). The reason why students do not have the ability to demonstrate high-level thinking skills, may be not encountering activities to develop high-level thinking skills beyond seeing and understanding the pictures in the books. Students need a variety of educational activities in order to demonstrate such skills. There are studies expressing there is ineffectiveness of the practical application despite the attainments aimed at improving students' high-level thinking skills such as "to ensure that they understand what they read and assess and question it with a critical perspective, to develop skills of accessing information from printed and multiple media resources, organizing, questioning, utilizing and producing information" in the curriculum of Turkish lessons (Ciftci, Sunbul & Koksak, 2013; Gozutok, Akgun & Karacaoglu, 2005; Korkmaz, 2006).

Another finding of the study is the number of words students used to describe the picture. Students built short sentences not exceeding 2-3 words. In addition, the vast majority of the sentences built belonged to the theme of description. Children in the age of primary school (6-8 years) have the abilities such as being able to build sentences in different structures, using conjunctives in their sentences, understanding the clues in the pictures and some of the abstract expressions. However, it was observed that the students did not infer beyond what they see in the picture, they did not generate different interpretations based on various clues, and did not show high-level thinking skills. In the study by Koc, Yildiz and Coskun (2015), grade 1 students were found not to use high-level thinking skills; In the study by Bromley (2003), the result was that students used high-level thinking skills and found different interpretations. In this context, the findings of our research study, is supported by the study by Koc, Yildiz and Coskun (2015) and is contradicted by the findings of Bromley (2003). Researchers advocating language functioning emphasize that speech, understanding, and reasoning are closely related to each other (Nadal, Amengual-Bunyola, Ramis, Capo & Cela-Conde, 2006) that there is an important relationship between cognitive processes and language development. While children develop linguistic and cognitive skills in their learning experiences; they also constitute and use cognitive processes and skills (Cohen, 2013). Main reasons for existing paradox are the following; taking into account skills and developments towards a single field when planning the education and training processes, when giving the students the target behaviors not allowing them to consider the events and situations with a holistic view, not creating a classroom

environment and atmosphere where they can express their thoughts freely, encouraging only stating what they see but not allowing speaking further.

One of the complementary purposes of our research is to examine the physical characteristics of the books "City on the Wind" and "The Little Match Girl" which are used in the application phase. Page layout is an important factor in illustrated children's books. In children's publications it is very important to arrange pictures and text, to arrange the lines and headings, to set the upper and lower margins, to opt for pages with regular or larger than regular line spacing, and to leave wide margins on the edges of the pages (Gonen, Karakus, Uysal, Kehci, Ulutas & Kahve, 2016). In this context, the size of the book "City on the Wind" and "The Little Match Girl" are large, the words are written in 14 fonts and over, the book covers are durable and interesting, the information that should be included in the cover, inside or back part of the book are complete, the book pages do not have sharp edges, and the words and texts in the books start in the same line-level and are in the normal line spacing. In general, it is observed that the books "City on the Wind" and "The Little Match Girl" are sufficient in terms of the physical characteristics that a children's book should possess.

A well-illustrated children's book; (Sever, 2012), is prepared with the cooperation of illustrator, writer, designer and publishers. Illustrations in books should both include familiar images present in the child's close environment, and also challenge the child's imagination. There must be a connection between illustration and text, if there is no connection between them, it can cause contradiction in the child. Another function of the pictures in the children's story books is to shed light on the written script (Nicholas, 2007). In the illustrated book, the pictures should be animated and the details should be relevant to the text (Sirin, 1998). In this context, the pictures in the book "The City on the Wind" and "The Little Match Girl" are colorful, engaging, concrete, entertaining and interpretive; the pictures are correlated to the subject and the text. In general, it is seen that books such as "The City on the Wind" and "The Girl in the Match" are sufficient in terms of the illustrative characteristics that a children's book should possess. The study by Gonen and Ari (1989) reveals the importance of increasing the weight of picture books in children's language development. The pictures contribute to the development of children's sensory perceptions because they convey emotions and thoughts that are beyond expression with words by means of pictures to the child (Yildiz, Yazici & Durmusoglu, 2015). In this context, the importance of illustrated children's books should not be ignored for the development of artistic and aesthetic concerns, and for language and cognitive development in children.

### Conclusion and Recommendations

The vast majority of sentences formed by the students belonged to the "description" theme. The sentences for the themes of superficial interpretation, imaginative interpretation and critical understanding were less frequently used by students. If we want students to view situations and problems from a holistic, interpretative and analytical point of view and develop their form of expression; education-training processes should be designed with enriched environments that will help students to think at higher levels. Students participating in this study were not able to demonstrate the high level of thinking skills expected from their age group. It can be said that students need various educational activities in order to demonstrate these skills. It is believed that students will be able to demonstrate cognitive development more appropriate for their developmental phase if their educational process is planned and organized with activities to improve the high-level thinking skills. Researchers advocating linguistic functionality emphasize that there is an important relationship between cognitive processes and language development; that they are closely related to each other (Nadal, Amengual-Bunyola, Ramis, Capo & Cela-Conde, 2006). In this context, when planning the education and training processes and environments, language and cognitive development should be considered from a holistic point of view. In order to drive students away from being memorizing individuals, it is necessary to allow students to encounter different situations, to develop their analysis skills, and to provide educational environments where they can have deeper interpretations beyond what they see.

Pictures in children's story books also contribute to the child's language development as well as creativity, intellectual and artistic development. The sentences formed by the students were limited to 2-3 words. In this context students should be introduced to activities where they can express their own thoughts in enriched and democratic classroom environments to improve speech and language skills.

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