

Prospective Teachers' Views on Story Use in Social Studies Teaching¹

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Abstract

Including literature and various disciplines, social studies courses given with literary works during the course allow students to develop their intellectual skills and increase interest in the course. The story which has an essential place in the literary products used in the course of social studies possess a facilitating effect on the transfer of social rules and culture to younger generations, helps students understand different ages and places, and plays a role on making divisions between the true and false or the good and evil. Hence, it is crucial to select the right story with the appropriate content for the course. In this sense, the research aims to determine prospective teachers' views on story usage in social studies lessons. A basic qualitative research design was adopted within the scope of the descriptive approach. The study group consists of 19 prospective teachers in the final year in Social Studies Education Department at state university in Turkey (Kafkas University). A semi-structured interview form prepared by the researcher was used in collecting the data. The researcher utilized descriptive and inferential codes that emerged during the analysis to explain the qualitative data and correlations. In light of the data, prospective teachers stated that the stories to be used in the social studies course should be appropriate for the social studies course achievement and grade level. Additionally, the participant teachers think that stories can be useful in ensuring the permanence of the information learned and drawing attention during the lesson. Also, prospective teachers expressed that the stories that are not used correctly and effectively could interfere with the course's goals or distract students.

Keywords: Story, Social Studies Course, Prospective Teacher

DOI: 10.29329/epasr.2020.270.3

¹ The abstract was presented in the 3rd International Education and Social Science Congress (INES) in 2018.

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Introduction

Social studies course is one of the primary lessons that appeal to students' social existence and includes daily life topics. The social studies course, which is the combination of literature, arts and social sciences with an interdisciplinary approach (Beldag and Aktas, 2016), can benefit from education programs, as well as some of the fields such as media, art, culture, current events, literature, and science (Akdag, 2009).

The Social Studies Curriculum (2005) emphasized the relationship between Social Studies and literature, and the use of literary texts and written works to establish a connection with the Turkish lesson and thereby help students gain patriotism. Moreover, the necessary skills for students in the curriculum include speaking Turkish correctly, fluently, and effectively, critical and creative thinking (Ministry of Education, 2018). In this respect, the use of oral and written literary products in Social Studies courses plays an essential role in realizing the course objectives and outcomes. Through the oral and written literary products used in the social studies course, students can develop analytical and critical thinking skills and have the opportunity to improve their language skills through texts that reflect language correctly and beautifully (Beldag and Aktas, 2016).

In the social studies course, it is aimed to make students qualified individuals with the target knowledge, skills, and values that students are to acquire. Teachers need to use different teaching methods/techniques, or materials to put this purpose into practice more effectively and efficiently. At this point, oral and written literature products distinguish among the primary materials used in social studies teaching. The primary materials used in social studies education involve oral and written products, and undoubtedly, one of them is "story."

By the integration the stories that are in accordance with the gains of social studies course, various advantages have different impacts among students such as a definite interest and attitude to the lesson, an increase in academic achievement, ensuring the retention of previously learned, making lessons fun and providing students with particular skills (Arslan, 2014; Bacak, 2008; Bisland, 1999; Common, 1986; Raines & Isbell, 1999; Savage & Savage, 1993; Simsek, 2006; Tunnel & Ammon, 1993; Turan, 2015).

In social studies teaching, stories as a teaching material can only possess such positive effects if they are used correctly. Thus, it is vital to pay attention to specific points. Stories should include topics that can reflect reality or truth, appeal to and improve students' imagination, be written in an understandable and comprehensible language (Demir & Akengin; 2014), and be exciting and immersive (Guleryuz, 2002).

The gained knowledge and experience in undergraduate education is essential for social studies teachers so that they can use stories as a teaching material effectively. For this reason, the

study reflects the opinions of the prospective social studies teacher about using stories as teaching material in social studies lessons.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine prospective social studies teachers' opinions about using stories as teaching material in social studies courses. In this sense, the answers to the following questions were sought in the research:

- In terms of knowledge and awareness about stories:
- What are prospective social studies teachers' perceptions about the story?
- What are their opinions about the features of stories used as teaching material in the course?
- What are their views on learning areas suitable for using stories in the social studies course?
- What do they think about the contributions of using stories to the teaching process?
- What are their views on problems that may arise during the use of the story in the social studies course?
- What are the weaknesses they feel regarding the use of stories in social studies teaching?

Method

Research Model

This study which intends to determine the opinions of prospective social studies teachers about the use of story adopted qualitative method in which researchers participate actively in the process of gathering information, present the findings in a natural, realistic and integrative manner, and in unwritten or oral form (Islamoglu, 2009; Robson, 2015; Yildirim & Simsek, 2008). A basic qualitative research design was used in line with the research aims (Merriam, 2002). According to Merriam (2013), researchers conducting basic qualitative research are concerned with how people interpret their lives and experiences and build their worlds. Basic qualitative studies reveal detailed assessments and interpretations of a phenomenon (relationships between conceptual categories and previous research) and provide new understandings (Merriam, 1998). Thus, the study utilized from the basic qualitative research design to determine in-depth and multiple perspectives and to reach a judgment about the use of "story" as teaching material in social studies education.

Sample

The study sample was formed with the adoption of an appropriate case study group technique based on the purposeful sampling and the selection of individuals and groups to be examined easily

(Sonmez & Alacapinar, 2014). The study was conducted on 19 prospective teachers, including ten girls and nine boys in the final year of Social Studies Education Department in a state university in Turkey (Kafkas University).

Data Collection

In accordance with the study goal, the interview technique was used which provides the in-depth information about the research by exploring the feelings and thoughts of the people who are the subject of the research, (Buyukozturk et al., 2010; Sonmez & Alacapinar, 2014). The data were collected through a semi-structured interview that enables the interviewees to express freely (Erkus, 2009) and, if necessary, can be rearranged on questions (Sonmez & Alacapinar, 2014). The questions in the interview were prepared, understandably, and without guidance. Then, expert opinions were taken about the questions, and necessary corrections were made in this sense. Also, to determine whether the statements are suitable for the group to be interviewed, pilot interviews were done with two prospective social studies teachers, and the interview questions were rearranged accordingly.

The interviews were done in the researcher's office. The researcher tried to create a comfortable atmosphere for the participants to give sincere answers, and the interviews lasted an average of 10-12 minutes. Interviews were recorded with a recording device.

Data Analysis

In the research, the data obtained from the interviews with the participants were translated. The interviews were recorded on the voice recorder to prevent data loss and ensure reliability. During the interview, questions that were not understood by prospective teachers were repeated. In the study, descriptive analysis method, in which direct quotations are frequently used, was used to reflect the opinions of the participants, and the data collected with open-ended questions in the semi-structured interview form (Yildirim & Simsek, 2008).

After the application, the answers given by the prospective teachers to open-ended questions were examined separately by both researcher and another expert. Descriptive and inferential codes that emerged from the analysis were used to explain the qualitative data and to establish a relationship. Two different experts coded the interview analysis separately to enhance the reliability, and the reliability coefficient was calculated with the formula $[(\text{reliability} = \text{Consensus} / (\text{Consensus} + \text{disagreement}))]$ developed by Miles and Huberman (1994). The reliability was calculated as 88%.

The codes were tabulated in the findings section and were frequently presented with prospective teacher opinions. Prospective teachers were coded as PT1, PT2, PT3,...

Findings

The findings of the study are presented below.

1. Prospective social studies teachers' knowledge and awareness of “stories”:

1.1. Perceptions of prospective social studies teachers about stories

In order to learn their knowledge and awareness of the story genre, “What is a story?” question was directed to prospective social studies teachers. The table below shows the prospective social studies teachers’ perceptions about the story genre.

Table 1. Prospective social studies teachers' perceptions about the story

What is a “story”?	f
Text describing the incidents (PT 2, PT3, PT6, PT7, PT9, PT10, PT11, PT12, PT14, PT15, PT16, PT18, PT 19)	13
Text describing the possible events (PT2, PT7, PT9, PT10, PT11, PT14, PT15, PT18)	8
Fiction (PT1, PT4, PT5, PT6, PT12, PT17)	6
Instructional text (PT8, PT13)	2
Text affecting people emotionally (PT7, PT8)	2
Plot (PT13)	1

According to the table, the participant prospective social studies teachers defined a story as "a fiction text of incidents or possible events." Below are the views of prospective teachers of social studies:

“It is the narration of events that happened, or are possible in the past, by a person today.” (PT10)

“It is a type of narration that includes the events experienced in the past, to transfer them to the generations that have grown up, and that include the features they need to experience in life.” (PT16)

1.2. Prospective teachers’ views on the features of stories that will be used as teaching material in the course

A table of the opinions of the prospective teachers regarding the features that should be found in the stories that will be used as teaching material in the social studies course is given below.

Table 2. Teacher views on the features which are required in stories

Features that should be present in the story	f
Suitable for course achievement (PT2, PT3, PT8, PT11, PT12, PT14, PT16, PT18)	8
Suitable for grade level (PT7, PT8, PT11, PT12, PT14, PT16, PT17, PT18)	8
A plain language (PT7, PT8, PT10, PT11, PT16, PT18, PT19)	7
Comprehensibility (PT7, PT 8, PT10, PT11, PT16, PT 18, PT19)	7
Noteworthy (PT10, PT11, PT12, PT18)	4
Fluency (PT10, PT 19)	2

The prospective social studies teachers were asked which features a story should possess to be used as teaching material in a course. To the table, prospective teachers indicated that the stories that will be used in the course should be appropriate to both lesson lessons' achievements and the students' levels as well as the language of the story should be plain and understandable. Below are the views of prospective teachers of social studies:

“The story should be about an acquisition.” (PT2)

“The story should be appropriate for the level, and the student should be able to understand, the language should be plain...” (PT7)

“It should draw the students’ attention, be comprehensible and fluent, and also have features such as plain language.” (PT10)

1.3. Prospective teachers’ opinions about learning areas suitable for story use in social studies lesson

The table below demonstrates the prospective social studies teachers' statements about the learning areas in which the use of stories is appropriate.

Table 3. Learning areas suitable for story use in social studies lesson

Suitable learning areas for story use	f
Culture and Heritage (PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4, PT5, PT6, PT7, PT8, PT9, PT10, PT11, PT12, PT13, PT14, PT15, PT16, PT17, PT18, PT19)	17
People, Places and Environments (PT2, PT4, PT5, PT6, PT7, PT8, PT11, PT15)	8
Production, Distribution and Consumption (PT3, PT4, PT11, PT14, PT19)	5
Individual and Society (PT16, PT17, PT18, PT19)	4
Science, Technology and Society (PT5, PT7, PT12)	3

As seen in the table, the prospective teachers state the learning areas suitable for the use of stories in social studies lessons as "culture and heritage," "people, places, and environments."

2. Prospective teachers' views on the contribution of using story as instructional material to the teaching

There is a table below prepared in line with prospective social studies teachers' views regarding the contributions of using story to the teaching process.

Table 4. Prospective teachers' views on the contribution of the story used in the teaching process

The benefits of using a story	f
Ensuring persistence (PT1, PT2, PT3, PT4, PT6, PT7, PT8, PT12, PT13, PT18)	10
Draw attention (PT6, PT9, PT10, PT12, PT13, PT14, PT15, PT16, PT18)	9
Providing a fun learning environment (PT7, PT8, PT16, PT17, PT18)	5
Improve clarity (PT7, PT11, PT12, PT16, PT19)	5
Increasing attendance (PT2, PT9, PT10, PT17)	4
A smooth course (PT12, PT13, PT19)	3
Effective learning environment (PT17, PT19)	2
Saving time (PT5, PT11)	2
Other (PT3, PT5, PT9, PT15, PT16)	5

According to the table, prospective teachers stated that using stories in social studies education can be more beneficial in maintaining permanence and attracting attention. Below are the views of prospective teachers of social studies:

"With the story, the information is easily kept in students' minds." (PT1)

"Events become memorable, and students' participation in class increases." (PT2)

"Lecturing with a story makes it more memorable, a better understanding of the student, and the lesson becomes more enjoyable." (PT7)

3. Prospective teachers' opinions about the problems that may arise during the use of story in a social studies course

Given below is a table of the prospective teachers' opinions regarding the problems that may arise during the use of the story in the social studies teaching.

Table 5. The problems that may arise during the use of story in a social studies course

Problems that may arise during the use of story	f
Distracting the lesson (PT2, PT3, PT5, PT6, PT8, PT12, PT13, PT14, PT15)	9
Less interest in the lesson (PT9, PT10, PT12, PT14, PT15, PT16, PT17, PT18)	8
Distraction (PT1, PT6, PT9, PT11, PT13, PT15, PT19)	7
Not appropriate for student level (PT11, PT12, PT14, PT15, PT16)	5
Poor classroom management (PT10, PT13, PT15, PT16)	4

Upon the examination of the table, it is clear that prospective teachers mentioned specific problems on story use during lessons such as distracting the lesson and the reduction of interest and attention. Below are the views of prospective teachers:

“Students may not be able to link the story to the subject.” (PT2)

“While reading the story, students may be interested in other things, distracted.” (PT9)

“While reading the story, the order in the classroom may be disrupted.” (PT10)

4. Prospective social studies teachers’ weaknesses concerning the use of stories during lessons

Table 6 shows the participant prospective teachers’ opinions regarding their weaknesses in using stories during lessons

Table 6. The points that prospective teachers feel insufficient regarding the story usage in social studies education

Weaknesses	f
Experience (PT1, PT6, PT9, PT10, PT14, PT17)	6
Story-making/Fictionalizing (PT2, PT3, PT4, PT5)	4
Classroom management (PT11)	1
Finding a suitable story for lesson goal (PT15)	1

When the table is analyzed, it is seen that the areas in which prospective social science teachers see themselves inadequate regarding the use of stories in the teaching process of the social studies course are mostly experience and story-making. Below are some examples of prospective social studies teachers' opinions:

"I cannot build a story myself." (PT3)

"I may be inadequate in constructing stories." (PT4)

"I think I am inadequate in terms of experience." (PT6)

“I learned the application example, but how do I apply it myself? Can I do it? I have doubts.” (PT9)

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

In this part of the study, the results obtained from the findings and discussions are presented.

1. Discussion, conclusion and recommendations about prospective social studies teachers' knowledge and awareness for stories

A story can be described as a short text, based on emotions and dreams (Ozkaya, 1985), which expresses actual or real events or situations with specific time and place (Ciravoglu, 2000) in verbal or written forms (TDK, 2015). To determine their knowledge and awareness of the stories, prospective social studies teachers were first asked what the story was. The participant prospective teachers mainly defined story as a fictional text describing events that happened or are likely to happen. In this sense, it can be thought that social studies prospective teachers have knowledge about the story and can define it.

The prospective teachers were asked what the characteristics should be in the stories. They stated that the stories should be in plain language and understandable in accordance with the attainment of the course and the levels of the students. The stories that will be used in the course should include real or near-real topics, having qualified to develop the imagination of students, and an understandable and plain language (Demir & Akengin 2014). It has been stated in the studies that the literary products to be used in the teaching process should be suitable for the level of the child, entertaining, remarkable, informative, fluent, understandable, and suitable for the lesson goals, possess national and spiritual values, and increase student participation (Ata, 2000; Beldag & Aktas, 2016; Erbaş, 2019; Hwang, 2017). On the other hand, Guleryuz (2002) mentioned that the stories should be compelling, immersive, suitable for the interests and intellectual worlds of the children, and should not include political, sexual, and provocative issues. After creating an appropriate atmosphere for storytelling in the classroom, such a learning environment associated with the course goal, enriched with clear, understandable, and exciting stories for students, will ensure the clarity and permanence of the topics covered.

The prospective teachers have been asked about which learning areas are more suitable for story use. They especially found it suitable for "culture and heritage" and "people, places, and environments" learning fields for the story. According to the studies on the use of literary products in literature, they can be mostly used in "culture and heritage" learning field, then in "people, places, and environments," "individual and society," and "communities, institutions and social organizations" fields respectively. To the participants, the story can be used in "culture and heritage," "global connections," "individual and society," and "communities, institutions, and social organizations" areas,

respectively (Beldag & Aktas, 2016). These results showed that the use of stories and other literary works in learning was restricted to specific fields and that these suitable learning fields were standard. It would be appropriate to conduct story-making practices about an achievement determined in undergraduate education so that those prospective teachers can benefit from stories in different learning areas. For example, story-making exercises can be done on topics such as empathizing with individuals with different characteristics in the field of "Individual and Society"; technological products and their effects on socialization in the field of learning "Science, Technology and Society"; Limitation of resources and being a conscious consumer in "Production, Distribution, and Consumption"; rights and responsibilities in "Efficient Citizenship" and respect for different cultures in "Global Connections" learning area.

2. Discussion, conclusion and recommendations regarding the contributions of the story as a teaching material

The prospective social studies teachers stated that they found stories as teaching materials useful to ensure permanence and to draw attention. There are many benefits of the stories used in the course. Teachers can use stories to teach knowledge and values and develop critical thinking in children (Hwang, 2017). Besides, stories provide students with the skills to connect between the past and the present, to perceive the past, to establish a cause and effect relationship, to distinguish between reality and the reality, to make students enjoy the teaching process, to understand the world and people's relationships with each other (Bisland, 1999; Raines & Isbell, 1999; Tunnell & Ammon, 1993).

Other studies have shown that there are many effects of the stories such as drawing students' attention, increasing success, allowing them to search and structure the knowledge from sources, enabling active participation, enhancing creativity, concretizing the learned material, integrating them to learning through enabling them to learn and understand new things (Arslan, 2014; Bacak, 2008; Common, 1986; Erbaş, 2019; Savage & Savage, 1993; Sidekli, Tanguulu & Yangin, 2013; Simsek, 2006; Turan, 2015). These results are similar to the results obtained from this study.

In the literature, the studies on the effect of using stories in different classes are available. To these studies, the use of story in history lessons develop students' understanding of history, contribute the concretization of the abstract knowledge they have learned, increase students' interest in the course and bring a different atmosphere and perspective to the course (Nelson & Nelson, 1999; Dilek & Sogucakli Yapici, 2005). In chemistry lessons, stories increase students' willingness to learn and realize meaningful learning (Demircioglu, Demircioglu & Ayas, 2006). In science classes, they improve academic success (Unver, 2015). Moreover, in the visual arts course, they positively contribute to students' creativity (Kayahan, 2010).

Many studies emphasize the positive contributions of stories to the teaching process. Additionally, the use of literary products including the story has positive effects such as giving motivation to students, help them acquire the habit of reading, facilitate socialization and having fun, ensuring the permanence of the learned, academic enrichment and drawing students' attention to the course (Beldag & Aktas, 2016; Yesilbursa & Sabanci, 2015). Hence, the story-supported teaching activities in the course are considered to be advantageous in many ways.

3. Discussion, conclusion and recommendations about the challenges of the story use during lessons

The majority of prospective teachers stressed the distraction of lesson goals and a reduction of attention as the main issues that can be experienced during the use of the story.

When the stories are not exciting and appropriate to students, teachers can fail to manage the classroom, decreasing students' interest in the course. Also, the use of irrelevant stories leads to distraction. Other challenges mentioned in studies on using literary products in social studies courses include being boring for some students, causing misunderstandings and ambiguous comments, and students' inability to make between fiction and the real distinction (Yesilbursa & Sabanci, 2015). Prospective teachers should be supported to choose the stories precisely and enrich the process with activities to minimize the problems. In lessons in which stories are used as teaching material, activities such as puzzle-solving, story-making, drama, and educational play can be an activity. The prospective teacher can improve their knowledge and experience in this regard by creating an activity in addition to fictionalization.

4. Discussion, conclusion and recommendations about the weaknesses the prospective social studies teachers feel about of the story use during lessons.

Most of the participant prospective teachers feel weaknesses and inadequate regarding story-making. The studies in literature also proved that those prospective teachers see themselves insufficient and unqualified to choose and use appropriate literary works in teaching (Beldag & Aktas, 2016; Yesilbursa & Sabanci, 2015).

The prospective teachers can compensate for their weaknesses and less experience through doing practices about the use of oral and written literary products. These teachers should be supported in performing enriched learning activities through the use of literary works. Many researchers found that prospective teachers felt incompetent about using and selecting literary products with appropriate levels (Beldag & Aktas, 2016; Yesilbursa & Sabanci, 2015). Prospective teachers may be asked to determine the topics that they felt unqualified and to practice in the "Oral and Written Literary Works in Social Studies" course. Since such a lesson is theoretical, there may be a problem, especially

regarding the duration. It will be useful to have extra time to apply these lessons to ensure that prospective teachers gain experience with the application examples.

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