



AN ANALYSIS ON TURKISH FAIRY TALES IN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR EDUCATIONAL PROPERTIES

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Abstract:

The purpose of this research is to analyze Turkish fairy tales in the context of educational properties of fairy tales. 10 Turkish fairy tales gathered around from different parts of Turkey by several researchers have been analyzed in the scope of the research conducted by document analysis method. Determining factors of the chosen fairy tales were that they had different storylines and characters and that they were from different regions of Turkey. The data analysis of the research was conducted with content analysis method and most of the analyzed fairy tales were exemplary to the reader-listener showing the characteristics of selflessness, bravery, benevolence, and honesty whereas some of the fairy tales were found to be weak in directing the reader-listener to act with confidence and use intelligence by portraying an image of dependency for supernatural powers while solving problems by the protagonists.

Keywords: fairytale, education, document analysis

1. Introduction

Childhood is the most critical part of life that leaves a mark on the rest of it. The acquired experiences and knowledge in this period lead to positive or negative thoughts and behaviors especially in adulthood (Adler, 1992; Bekmezci and Özkan, 2015). It is important to have a healthy childhood in this respect.

Literature and especially children's literature benefits the child a lot but essentially it helps the child to comprehend and carry the social norms and values into the future (Küçükbasmacı and Öztürk, 2011; Büyükokutan Töret, 2018; Kılıç and Yılmaz, 2018; Gümüştepe and Ayaz, 2018) and understand the delicacies and richness of the native language and help them to gain the ability to communicate in a healthy manner (Temizyürek, 2003; Aytaş, 2006; Günay Köprülü, 2015; Duran and Ercan, 2018).

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Fairy tales are an important product of children's literature defined in the Turkish Dictionary as *"The literary genre generally created by the public based on imagination and that lives in oral tradition and is about the supernatural incidents that mostly humans, animals, and witches, jinnees, giants, fairies etc. go through."* (TDK, 2012) and they have many educational properties. (Yılmaz, 2012). They are accepted as one of the oldest and most widespread genres of world literature (Bolat, 2017) even though there are different views on the sources (Arıcı, 2004). The widespread quality of it can be understood more clearly considering the existence of the fairy tales even in the primitive tribes (Helimoğlu Yavuz, 2007).

The fairy tales which have been used in children's education for the longest time have *"didactic, educational and instructive qualities. Children learn what is right and what is wrong and that doing evil never go unpunished and the good never go unnoticed through the fairy tales. In a sense, fairy tales are a product that advises being "a good person" (Ilıcak and Başoğlu, 2018, p. 90).* The educational property of fairy tales can be said to stem from this. Because the ultimate purpose of education is to train individuals that exhibit terminal behaviors. (Hoogland, 1993; Gómez, 2010).

The purpose of this research is to analyze 10 Turkish fairy tales from different regions in Turkey gathered around by several researchers in terms of educational qualities stemming from the view that fairy tales are valuable in an educational sense.

2. Method

The research was conducted by the document analysis method which is one of the qualitative research methods. *"The document analysis method involves the written materials that have information about the targeted case or cases"* (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008, p. 187).

These are the reviewed fairy tales in this research:

1. Tek Atlı Tekin Olmaz (Lone Horseman Is Never Auspicious) (Kaftancıoğlu, 1973, p. 12-23)
2. Yedi Başlı Dev (Seven-Headed Giant) (Kaftancıoğlu, 1973, p. 152-159)
3. Perili El (The Haunted Hand) (Güney, 1997, p. 99-104)
4. Elmas Beşik (The Diamond Basset) (Güney, 1997, p. 338-354)
5. Tilkiyken Nohudu (The Fox and His Chickpea) (Arslan, 2000, p. 465-467)
6. Keloğnannan Dayısı (Keloğlan and His Uncle) (Arslan, 2000, p. 470-473)
7. Akıllı Çocuk (The Clever Boy) (Dinler, 2002, p. 66-68)
8. Bir Baba ve Üç Oğlu (A Father and His Three Sons) (Dinler, 2002, p. 232-234)
9. İyilikle Kötülük (The Good and the Evil) (Alptekin, 2002, p. 289-291)
10. Allah'ı Arayan Adam (The Man Searching for God) (Alptekin, 2002, p. 328)

Determining factors of the chosen fairy tales were that they had different storylines and characters and that they were from different regions of Turkey. The above ranking will be followed when examining the fairy tales.

3. Data Analysis

Content analysis method was used in the analysis of the data obtained from the fairy tales. *"The process in content analysis is basically to gather the similar data in the framework of certain concepts and themes and organize and interpret them in a way the reader can understand"* (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008, p. 227).

4. Findings

4.1 The Comparison of Good and Evil in Fairy Tales

The fairy tales are resources that have many lessons in them not only for children but anyone who reads them. Fairy tales use their own narrative and fiction in doing so.

The fairy tales are built on a fiction of good-evil and rich-poor from the beginning to the end and convey its message through the relationship between these concepts. The child can understand the importance and the value of good and evil and the importance of money in the struggle for life by looking at a description or incident about a poor person. This is what it is meant by teaching contrasting values. The traces of learning such contrasts during childhood, which is a really susceptible period for influence as mentioned before, will be seen again later in life.

The mentioned contrasts stand out in the approached fairy tales. For example, the protagonist in the "Tek Atlı Tekin Olmaz" (Lone Horseman Is Never Auspicious) (Kaftancıoğlu, 1973, p. 12-23) fairy tale is a very impetuous person who acts without thinking while his father is experienced and knows the importance of holding on and thinking about an encountered situation. The father and son see a cave at the beginning of the fairy tale. There is delicious smelling smoke coming from the inside of the cave. The child hurls himself inside.

"- Father, is there something inside the cave? Let's go inside a while" (p. 12).

There is amazingly delicious food there. His father warns him while the child starts eating the food without thinking about it as he did with entering the cave:

"- Son do not touch them. Just in case" (p. 12).

This warning shows experience while the child eating the food hungrily without caring for the warning although he does not know what he may face shows inexperience. The fairy tale conveys the message of how experience affects a person for the better and thus children should listen to grown-ups from the beginning.

Similar moral values and messages are given throughout the fairy tale many times. This as in the example is done through completely opposite personality types. The message of not being direct is another aspect of the turn of phrase of the fairy tales. The purpose here is for the reader (child) to understand and interpret what has been read. This naturally contributes to the cognitive development of the child. The message

being given indirectly over a situation and the child arriving at a conclusion by interpreting it is a facilitating factor in making the child adopt and remember the message while giving the intended message directly to the child may cause him or her to lightly pass over it.

The other contrast in the chosen fairy tales is the contrast between the good and the evil. The protagonist in the fairy tale of "Tek Atlı Tekin Olmaz" (Lone Horseman Is Never Auspicious) (Kaftancıoğlu, 1973, p. 12-23) is a benevolent person. The protagonist helps the people he comes across in the story, even the ones he has never met before. There is the "ill-hearted goldsmith" character on the opposite of him. The ill-hearted goldsmith claims the protagonist's extremely valuable cup even though it does not belong to him. He doesn't shy away from lying about it either. This fairy tale comes to a happy ending and the evil gets his punishment as in all fairy tales. This conveys the message of evil-doing never goes unpunished no matter what and that the evil can never win.

The protagonist of the fairy tale of "Yedi Başlı Dev" (Seven-Headed Giant) (Kaftancıoğlu, 1973, p. 152-159) has many good virtues while his two brothers cannot think of something else than evildoing. Even the old lady that the protagonist meets shows hospitality and offers him food while his own brothers won't let him out of the cave he walked down. The reason as for that is jealousy. Of course, at the end of the tale, everyone gets what they deserve but the protagonist of the tale gives another important message by forgiving his brothers despite what they have done to him.

In the fairy tale of "Perili El" (The Haunted Hand) (Güney, 1997, p. 99-104) there were no opposite poles in terms of good versus evil but a difference between the good events and the bad events. "Gül Kız" (Miss Rose), the protagonist of the tale lives a perfect life in a rich family until everything changes after her family's death. The protagonist of the tale, who had never done any work for being the single child of the family, gets married after losing her family but fails to manage any work and this causes some problems.

Fairies are characters that help humans in tough situations in fairy tales. In the fairy tale of "Elmas Beşik" (The Diamond Basset) (Güney, 1997, p. 338-354) it is the opposite case. The evil spirits are the ones who turn Bahtiyar (lit. happy, fortunate), one of the characters of the fairy tale into a bird and separate him from his mother and beloved girlfriend. Many characters represent the good in the fairy tales. For example, Keloğlan and his mother help Gülbahar who is in love with Bahtiyar even though they don't know her. This is a Turkish culture quality that is placed in the fairy tale. While there is something his mother could do for Bahtiyar to turn him into a human again, he cannot approach them fearing the fairies could hurt his loved ones. He says that he cannot take the risk. At this, his mother replies:

"Who will my baby hurt if it isn't me? I'll carry it from not only seven creeks but seven oceans, if it is not enough I'll become the water itself; I will become fire and burn it all so that he can free himself" (Güney, 1997, p. 353).

This conveys the message that a mother could do anything for her child.

The fairy tale of “Tilkiyenen Nohudu” (The Fox and His Chickpea) (Arslan, 2000, p. 465-467) is a classic cunning fox tale. At the beginning of the fairy tale, the fox tries to take what belongs to other people by lying. The fox, described as evil in the beginning due to being a liar, later becomes the protagonist who is praised for his intelligence because of the intelligent games he plays to get away from the wolf he encounters.

Keloğlan who is famous for using his intelligence in a masterful way, shows this quality in the fairy tale of “Keloğlannan Dayısı” (Keloğlan and His Uncle), too. (Arslan, 2000, s. 470-473). There are also good people and evil people in this fairy tale. The good characters are the naive uncle who works all day and night in the field and Keloğlan who helps him but is aware of the games the aunt-in-law is playing. Keloğlan's aunt-in-law is a cheater. Even though Keloğlan kills the person causing his uncle to be cheated on by pouring boiling hot oil in his mouth, what he does in the process of uncovering his aunt-in-law's wrongdoing is a product of intelligence. The evil does not go unpunished here as well.

The fairy tale of “Akıllı Çocuk” (The Clever Boy) (Dinler, 2002, p. 66-68) is all based on the virtue of good-doing. The youngest of the three siblings uses the money his father gives to build a bridge and to bring the homeless children to his country and educate them from a land where a flood has damaged. The other two siblings use the money to increase their wealth. The difference of views between the youngest brother and other two is set forth and the importance of education for people is emphasized with this fairy tale.

In the fairy tale of “Bir Baba ve Üç Oğlu” (A Father and His Three Sons) (Dinler, 2002, p. 232-234) the evil character is the “Arap” (Arab). Sinan be-damns the sultan of his land and causes for the sultan to perish. The sister-in-law of the sultan is a good person with magical powers and assures the sultan to be human again. This proves that the good always prevails.

The fairy tale of “İyilikle Kötülük” (The Good and the Evil) (Alptekin, 2002, s. 289-291) has the good and the evil directly as the characters in the plot and proves that even though the “Eyinlik doesn't do anything, it still eventually wins the fight between ‘Eyinlik’ (the good) and ‘Kötünlük’ (the bad). It conveys the message that the good always prevails while showcasing the beauty and purity of good to the reader-listener.

The fairy tale of “Allah'ı Arayan Adam” (The Man Searching for God) (Alptekin, 2002, p. 328) is the story of a pure-minded man wearisome of poverty and is on the search of God for that matter. The good-doing is praised throughout the tale. The protagonist gets eaten at the end of the fairy tale by the wolf due to being too pure-minded. In this way, it is conveyed that too much of anything will bring harm. The fairy tale explains that the people to help should be chosen carefully with the protagonist who pays the price of the favor he does for the “evil wolf” with his life.

4.2 People and Characters in Fairy Tales

The people-creatures take on various roles in every fairy tale. For example, the fairies and nymphs usually represent the good. In the fairy tale of “Perili El” (The Haunted

Hand), the fairies act in accordance with this role and help the protagonist. But in the fairy tale “Tek Atlı Tekin Olmaz” (Lone Horseman Is Never Auspicious) and “Elmas Beşik” (The Diamond Basset), it is seen that the creatures with these supernatural powers use their gifts to cause harm and hurt people. The elderly in the fairy tales are experienced and guiding characters.

They represent innocence and purity besides they open their doors to the protagonists in difficult times and show hospitality. The fate in the fairy tale of “Allah’ı Arayan Adam” (The Man Searching for God) is an old person. In the fairy tale, the fate tells that he doesn't have evil intentions against anyone as it turns its wheels. Here, the fate acts in accordance with the old and guiding stereotype and shows the way and tells the poor shepherd what to do to. But the grandmother in the fairy tale of “Yedi Başlı Dev” (Seven-Headed Giant) doesn’t fulfill this expectation. The grandmother first declines the request of the protagonist and acts differently than the elderly people perception explained above by saying “*Oh, yes I have a place for you, come on in, son.*” (p. 155) after seeing the gold he has. The three old men in “Bir Baba ve Üç Oğlu” (A Father and His Three Sons) and the old lady and man in the “Tek Atlı Tekin Olmaz” (Lone Horseman Is Never Auspicious) act in accordance with societal roles and try to help and guide him. Keloğlan, the quick-witted and bald protagonist of Turkish fairy tales is a contended person despite being poor and he is loyal to his lonely mother even though he is the son-in-law of the sultan and he is a person who uses his intelligence to the max despite his naive looks.

In the fairy tale of “Keloğlannan Dayısı” (Keloğlan and His Uncle), Keloğlan acts in line with his general characteristics. He acts like he is not aware of the games being played behind his uncle's back, but he is aware of everything and solves the negative situation he is in thanks to his quick wit.

If someone is called a fox in the society, it is to emphasize on his or her cunningness and to indicate how he or she wriggles out of every situation. This is the fox in the fairy tale of “Tilkiyken Nohudu” (The Fox and His Chickpea). Cunningness is his gift. He escapes from being eaten by the wolf using this quality. The sultans in the fairy tales represent power, strength and justice.

The sultan putting his three sons into a test before he dies in the fairy tale of “Akıllı Çocuk” (The Clever Boy) indicates that the power should be left to able hands. The test sultan holds show that he does not discriminate between his children, meaning he attaches importance to justice and will resign the crown to the deserving. The sultan in the fairy tale of “Elmas Beşik” (The Diamond Basset) displays a different picture than what is described above. The sultan who kills innocent people for no reason exhibits an attitude far from the just sultan stereotype.

4.3 Child Protagonists in Fairy Tales

4.3.1 Child Protagonists’ Psychological Appearances

There are child protagonists in all seven of the fairy tales. Every protagonist has their own psychological qualities. The qualities of fairy tales with child protagonists and the psychological qualities of the child protagonists of these fairy tales are as follows:

a. Tek Atlı Tekin Olmaz (Lone Horseman Is Never Auspicious)

The protagonist of the fairy tale is a child curious enough to go into the places he doesn't know about. The child saying "*Father, is there something inside the cave? Let's go in a while.*" (p. 12) and entering it despite his father's warning on their journey with his father shows that the child has a curious nature. The protagonist child of the fairy tale entering "*the spring with no return*" and fighting the monsters there without hesitation indicates his courage (p. 14, 17, 19). The protagonist also is seen to have a satiated personality besides these qualities. He is satiated enough to say, "*All I wish is that your wellness my sultan.*" (p. 20) to the offer of "*Wish whatever you want from me.*" (p. 20) from the sultan of the land they helped. The answer "*I do not wish for anything, but you can give my old mother plenty of flour if you insist.*" (p. 20) given by the protagonist child to the sultan's insisting showcases his benevolent personality.

In the beginning of the fairy tale, the thieves give the child a horse to take care of. Their goal is to make an excuse to kill the boy. The child is given forty days to make the horse better, but he manages to nurse the ill-conditioned horse back to perfect health in a week. (p. 13) This indicates that the child is a hardworking person. The protagonist child of the fairy tale wouldn't even think to harm the thieves who tried to hurt him. He is sharing enough to say, "*This is my earning and we will divide this between forty-one brothers.*" (p. 15) about the very valuable cup he has and shares it with the people who wanted to hurt him, and he is a man of his word enough to lay down his life for the sake of the promise he made to save their lives.

b. Yedi Başlı Dev (Seven-Headed Giant)

The three children in this fairy tale are brothers. The youngest one of the brothers kill the giant by beheading him and he wouldn't stop there and wants to pursue the head of the giant that fell into the well. He says to his brothers: "*We will go down there. This is where the giants came from. If we can eradicate them...*" (p. 153) This shows how courageous and fearless the little kid is.

There are three girls in the fairy tale. The prettiest of them is also very smart and has the ability to foresee things. She says to the brave child: "*Listen to me, you go out first, because if you go out first they will say 'Look at our brother, he takes the prettiest one to himself!' I'm afraid they will harm you.*" (p. 154) and after that the other brothers leaving the boy in the cave proves that she was right.

The child forgiving his big brother despite all the evil that has been done to him at the end of the fairy tale by saying, "*Don't be afraid. I will not kill you. Your share is that and my share is this!*" (p. 159) shows a great virtue and a strong personality.

c. Perili El (The Haunted Hand)

"Gül Kız" (Miss Rose), the protagonist of the fairy tale is an only child. For this reason, she has been spoiled a lot by her parents. She experiences great challenges after losing her parents because she was spoiled this much. Her happiness is jeopardized by this physical and mental weakness after being married. Gül Kız prays to God and says: "*Good God! I have two hands and ten fingers, but they are good for nothing; I either make matters worse or make a mess. If things continue like this, my house and life will shatter. You are the one I see and trust. Help me my God.*" (p. 101) and this reflects her weak character.

d. Elmas Beşik (The Diamond Basset)

One of the child characters of this fairy tale is Gülbahar. Her most significant quality is devotion and not wanting anyone to be harmed because of her. Her sultan father executing the huntsman after not finding the bird the girl admires and that they were assigned to find makes her very upset. After this, she says: *"I wished for a bird, not a head or a cup made of ivory. Who knows how many brave men lost their lives because of me... Who knows how many children got orphaned because of me... If the blood of the brave men won't damn me, the curse of the orphans will; who knows what will happen to me!"* (p. 341-342) and leaves home so that no one else gets hurt. The other child character of the fairy tale is Keloğlan. He bravely tries to help the girl in this fairy tale, too (p. 334).

e. Keloğlannan Dayısı (Keloğlan and His Uncle)

The child protagonist of this fairy tale is Keloğlan. He undercovers the betrayal against his uncle and he is fearless enough to kill the lover of the aunt-in-law (p. 472).

f. Akıllı Çocuk (The Clever Boy)

There are three child protagonists in this fairy tale. The special emphasis is on how the youngest brother is very benevolent and knows how to spend what he has despite being the youngest one. Loving people and knowing that education is the best investment to make for a person indicates his consciousness and humanitarianism. Upon the question about the way, he has spent the money by his father, he replies with *"I have had the rocks shattered and built a bridge above the water. I have taken in the children that the water has orphaned. I thought to raise and train and make beneficial people out of these children to my country."* (p. 67-68) and this both helps the son pass the test and reveal his personality. Other two brothers are trying to have worldly possessions and increasing their wealth. This showcases their weak personalities.

g. Bir Baba ve Üç Oğlu (A Father and His Three Sons)

The one who has an adventure is the youngest brother even though there are three brothers in this fairy tale. His first trait that stands out is his self-devotion. He says to his brothers *"...it is my destiny if I cannot make it; you leave here."* (s. 233) when he sees the snake that intercepts them, and he exhibits a great example of selflessness. The other trait of the child in the fairy tale is that he keeps his promises. The snake says that he would free the girl next to him with the condition of finding the answer to the question he will ask after the brothers leave. The child returns with the answer after a long adventure. This shows that he is both brave and is a man of his word.

4.3.2 Descriptions of the Child Protagonists

It is seen that in some of the fairy tales some of the qualities of the characters are described to create a physical or psychological image of the character for the readers or listeners. The children are clearly described only in three of the chosen fairy tales.

In the fairy tale of "Yedi Başlı Dev" (Seven-Headed Giant), one of the girls the boy tries to save from a well is described as very beautiful and her beauty is defined like this:

"He who sees her would become incapacitated. The water she drinks is visible through her throat and it says I will rise instead of you to the moon and sun." (s. 154)

"The light from her face blinded the people around the well before she was halfway through the well." (p. 154-155)

The description of the protagonist, Gül Kız in the fairy tale "Perili El" (The Haunted Hand) is as follows:

"She looks like a rose in between reds; she looks like a cypress in midst of branches; I wonder if you would have the heart to look at her." (p. 99)

Gülbahar, the legendarily beautiful daughter of the sultan in the "Elmas Beşik" (The Diamond Basset) is described as follows:

"There is a girl named Gülbahar, she would blossom with flowers in the rose season in the time of spring and she would sing along with the birds, but her voice was so trembling, and she was so shy like a gazelle running away from a strange huntsman... She wouldn't come in sight of everyone; she wouldn't attend feasts or weddings; if she goes, she goes to the pool and if she tambours she would tambour colorfully, all speckled; besides a wedding or a festival." (p. 338)

Keloğlan mentioned in the same fairy tale is described by his mother as "I said he can cover his bald head with a cap so may God not give him any other flaw; I did everything for him. So, it was in his blood and I had an excellent son." (p. 342) Another child in the fairy tale is Goncagül, the daughter of Gülbahar. The beauty of Goncagül is described as "Looks like the moon; looks like a star; a healthy and beautiful girl." (p. 349)

5. Conclusion and Discussion

It is clear that utilizing fairy tales in children's education will provide important benefits. It is especially important that the child identifies with a protagonist in his or her rich imagination and thus, the good qualities of the protagonist will set an example for the kid. Fairy tales guide the children in coping with any challenge faced in real life. Fairy tales about protagonists dealing with complicated situations by using their intelligence and skills and not supernatural powers teach the child to trust his or her intelligence and use it effectively.

The fairy tale "The Fox and His Chickpea", "Keloğlan and His Uncle" and "A Father and His Three Sons" differentiate from other with the protagonists not having supernatural powers. The protagonists are helped by fairies and wizards in the other fairy tales. The protagonists of these fairy tales are not in the position of problem solvers but the ones who wish for something supernatural to happen. They demonstrate weakness with this aspect.

Despite the contrary views on the origins of the fairy tales, they include national cultural elements. All of them show compliance with the Turkish cultural lifestyle when the chosen fairy tales are handled from this point. The people in the fairy tales are generally good, brave, understanding, devoted and honest even though some characters may show improper behaviors. The chosen fairy tales can be used in transmitting these properties belonging to the Turkish culture. One of the improper behaviors is Keloğlan's killing someone in "Keloğlan and His Uncle". Murdering someone clashes with Keloğlan's character. The message of evil doesn't go unpunished is tried to be given through Keloğlan killing a man in this fairy tale. But considering that the fairy tale protagonists are role models for the child, this may have an adverse effect on children. According to Şimşek (2017), Keloğlan's negative and positive behaviors in various fairy tales are due to the contrasts in the nature of fairy tales and this helps the reader to know and interpret him/herself and the world s/he lives in.

The fairy tales being used for children's education throughout the history by different nations indicate its importance. The choosing of the fairy tales which are still being used as an important tool must be done considering their effects on the child.

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