INVESTIGATION OF NURSERY RHYMES ACCORDING TO THE CLASSIFICATION OF SEMANTIC FIELDS AND VALUES[i]

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Abstract:

Nursery rhymes are quite important in terms of developing children's language skills. It was observed that there is a paucity of research looking at semantic fields and value regarding nursery rhymes; therefore, this study was intended to fill that gap in the literature by investigating nursery rhymes in terms of semantic fields and value. In this study, forty-eight nursery rhymes sung were investigated, using content analysis. While, according the results of the study, semantic domains of people, animals, vehicles, body parts, clothing, toys, furniture, household items and utensils are similar to Clark's (1995) classification, number, nature, place, tool, musical instrument, material and time semantic domains were added and thus the original classification was expanded. Moreover, in fifteen out of the forty-five nursery rhymes, values were mentioned. The nursery rhymes were found to be featuring the values of punishment, mercy, industriousness, violence, robbery, loyalty, respect, love, breaking promise, cruelty to animals, lying and disloyalty. Like all texts affecting the world of children, nursery rhymes should be examined in terms of their content on whether they affect children negatively or not.

Keywords: nursery rhymes, semantic fields, value

1. Introduction

Nursery rhymes are an important part of children's games. "*Nursery rhymes are short poems or songs that are often made up of trivial musical verses*" (Dunst, Meter, Hamby, 2011, p. 1). Nursery rhymes are poetic texts full of rhymes that entertain children. They can be

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easily memorized due to rhymes involved; they instill the sense of rhythm in children and enhance the imagination and linguistic skills of children. Nursery rhymes are a part of children's lives: before starting a game, during the game and after the game. With the words they include, nursery rhymes enhance the conceptual world of children.

According to Aksan (1971, p. 254), "…*semantic field affecting the world of children is the field which encompasses the concepts associated with each other, having similar meanings and synonyms*".

As stated by Clark (1973), theories of semantic development consist of McNeill's (1970) "*The grammatical relations hypothesis*", Anglin's (1970) "*The generalization hypothesis*", Postal's (1966) "*The universal primitives hypothesis*". Clark (1973) added "*The semantic feature hypothesis*" to theories of semantic development" and defined the semantic feature hypothesis as: "*The semantic feature hypothesis states that when the child first begins to use identifiable words, he does not know their full (adult) meaning: He only has partial entries for them in his lexicon, such that these partial entries correspond in some way to some of the features or components of meaning that would be present in the entries for the same words in the adult's lexicon. The hypothesis therefore assumes that the child's use and interpretation of words may differ considerably from the adult's in the early stages of the language-acquisition process, but, over time, will come to correspond to the adult model*" (p. 72).

Clark's (1995) semantic field, based on the idea that concepts are situated in a field made up of combination of various particles limiting each other, contends that domain should be examined within a field. According to this theory, the value of each domain can be measured by means of its relation with other concepts and its content. The semantic field is defined as "…*the field in which concepts close to each other or somehow related to each other, words that are synonymous are considered together*". One of the studies conducted on children's semantic fields is the semantic field classification study by Clark. In the study conducted with children who were in the process of language acquisition, Clark classified the semantic domain as people, animals, vehicles, body parts, clothing, toys, furniture, household items and utensils, food, food utensils, properties and states and activities.

Clark's semantic fields classification is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Clark's semantic fields classification

People	baby, man, mummy, boy, girl, people
Animals	cat, dog, rabbit, duck, mouse, zebra, animal
Vehicles	car, truck, train, bike, sled, fire-truck
Body parts	nose, toe, eye, head, finger, hand, knee
Clothing	diaper, sock, jacket, shirt, button
Toys	block, ball, clown, doll, bus, slinky, toy
Furniture	chair, cushion, table, rug, bed, bath
Household items and utensils	telephone, light, kettle, plug, clock, stairs
Food	milk, juice, cheese, nut, egg, carrot, food, cereal
Food utensils	bottle, cup, spoon, plate, lid, bowl, glass
Properties and states	hot, big, stuck, wet, tight, shut, sleepy
Activities	get, put, go, do, up, out, fall, jump, drive

(Clark, 1995)

Development of the semantic field possessed by children considerably affects children's world of values. According to Veugelers and Vedder, "*Values are judgments based on a notion of what is good and what is bad; they refer to concepts of a 'just life'. Values are not personal preferences based on taste; they are judgments based on more or less explicit and systematic ideas about how a person relates to his/her environment*" (Veugelers, Vedder, 2003, p. 379).

Two views about the nature of moral values are: (1) values must be absolute if they are to be worthy of our esteem and (2) values are strictly private and personal affairs, and hold no greater validity than a purely aesthetic validation (Churchill, 1982, p. 298).

When the research on nursery rhymes is reviewed, it is seen that the focus is on the appearance rather than the content. When the semantic fields and value research is examined, it is seen that Gökmen (2005) investigated a pre-school education set and Eken (2015) examined the story books prepared for students aged five years old and over by using Clark's semantic fields classification. As a result of the literature review, no semantic field and value study directly focusing on Turkish nursery rhymes was found. In this regard, the focus has shifted towards the investigation of nursery rhymes in relation to semantic fields classification and values. The purpose of this study is to analyze the nursery rhymes frequently used by children in their games in terms of semantic fields classification and value.

2. Method

In this study, forty-eight nursery rhymes sung by TRT (Turkey Radio and Television Corporation) Ankara Children's Choir in the album "Eveleme Develeme" were investigated. As three of these nursery rhymes are the repetition of other rhymes, they were discarded from the investigation. The nursery rhymes investigated were the following: Bir iki üç, Annem yoğurt getirdi, Bezirgan başı, Yağ yağ yağmur, Ağustos böceği, Ayşe Hanımın keçileri, Buğday tekerlemesi, Ben kimim, Ebe, Ali Veli, Eveleme develeme, Horoz döğüşü, Bindim elma dalına, Masal masal, O mo simiyo, Annem bana, Bir iki üç müüç, Mini mini birler, Posta treni, Dingildo, Gökte yıldız sayılmaz, Kayıkçı, Ceviz Adam, O dosi dosi, İnci minci, Aydede, Tembel, Kemal Paşa, Çiftçi çukurdaydı, Üşüdüm, Ambara vurdum, Yarın bayram olsa, Ayşe pabucu yarım, Uç uç böceği, Leylek, Ayağıma basma, Entere mentere, Tilkiyi tuttuk, Altı kere altı, Tavşan kaç, Körebe, Portakalı soydum, Yağ satarım. The nursery rhymes sung were transcribed and they were enumerated. While their content analysis was being conducted, the words were written in the related conceptual field by coding according to the number of the rhyme. Semantic fields in the nursery rhymes were analyzed based on Clark's (1995) classification.

The analyses were manually conducted. After the researchers conducted the analyses, they were examined by another researcher to ensure reliability. After reaching an agreement on groups subsumed under the semantic domains, the data analysis process was completed.

Moreover, after the nursery rhymes were investigated word by word, they were subjected to content analysis to analyze the values they include. Out of the 45 nursery rhymes, 15 were detected to have statements containing values.

3. Findings

In this section, findings related to semantic fields classification and values are presented.

3.1. Semantic fields classification

Frequency and percentage values related to the usage semantic domains emerging as a result of the analysis of the nursery rhymes are presented in Table 2 and their percentage display is shown in Figure 1.

Table 2: Frequency and percentage values related to frequency of use of semantic domains

		f	%
People	Person	28	4,63
	Profession	24	3,97
	Relative	29	4,79
Animals		41	6,78
Vehicles		2	0,33
Body parts		31	5,12
Clothing		15	2,48
Toys		12	1,98
Furniture		5	0,83
Household items and utensils		4	0,66
Food		42	6,94
Food utensils		3	0,50
Number		62	10,25
Nature		18	2,98
Place		23	3,80
Tool		7	1,16
Musical instrument		4	0,66
Material		10	1,65
Time		6	0,99
Properties and states		40	6,61
Activities		199	32,89

Figure 1: Percentage display of semantic fields
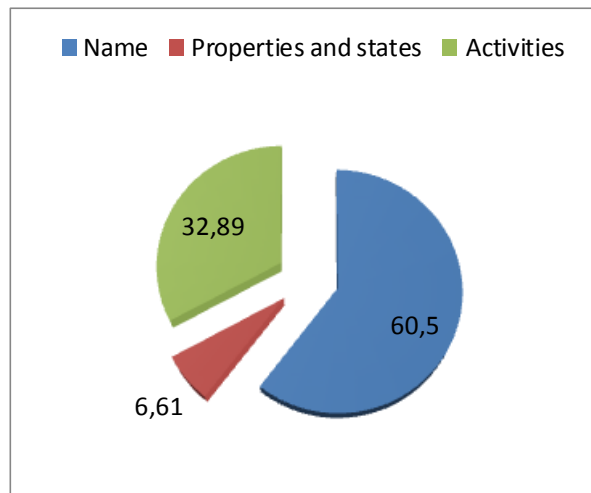
When the distribution of semantic fields was examined, it was seen that the semantic field having the highest frequency of use with 366 usages was the category of name. The name category consisted of 17 semantic domains which were people, animals, vehicles, body parts, clothing, toys, furniture, household items and utensils, food, food utensils, number, nature, place, tool, musical instrument, material, time. Thus, the highest number of domains was in the name category. The name category

was followed by activities semantic domain with 199 usages and the semantic domain having the least frequency of usage was properties and states semantic domain with 40 usages.

Semantic domains and word diversification in the name category are shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Semantic domains and word diversification in the name category

Semantic Domains		Word Diversification
People	Person	fairy girl, girl, boy, Walnut Man, blind man's buff, child, ebe (the seeker in the game), friend, Ayşe, Fatma, Musacık, Ali, Veli, Esma, Ayşe Hanım, keepsake
	Profession	garbage man, rug weaver, craftsman, boatman, doctor, postman, farmer, bezirgan başı (doorman), agha, pasha, Kemal Paşa
	Relative	cousin, mother, sister, father, son, daughter, brother, wife, child, grandfather, lovers and beloved
Animals		cat, rat, ant, goat, ostrich, camel, fox, jackal, mouse, crow, hen, horse, nightingale, dog, ladybug, stork, fox, bird, rabbit
Vehicles		train, ship
Body parts		nose, hair, eye, skin, hand, ear, tail, beauty stop, neck, heart, eye brow, abdomen, foot, beard, moustache, arm
Clothing		slipper, shoe, fur, pocket, earring, hat
Toys		without game, hoop, folktale, race, loop, ball, hopscotch
Furniture		cupboard, door
Household items and utensils		candle, rug, wire
Food		egg, lemon, sunflower seed, oil, honey, cheese, orange, meat, grass, yoghurt, dough, barley, hay, wheat, oily pastry, apple, pilaf, chocolate, lemonade, water, meal, fincan böreği (a kind of pastry), almond, rice, animal feed
Food utensils		frying pan, basin, glass
Number		one, two, three, four, three and a half, five, six, six and a half, seven, eight, nine and a half, ten and a half, seventeen, forty nine, fifty, ten, twelve, fifteen, nine, thirty six
Nature		rain, field, mad, sky, star, wind, Aydede (the name given to the moon by children), moon, night, air, mountain, branch
Place		cellar, bus stop, palace, warehouse, minaret, market place, arbor, room, ceiling, path, hole, outside, ditch, Arabia, Aleppo
Tool		shovel, water pump, trap, cage, nail, wood
Musical instrument		violin, drum, stringed instrument, bell
Material		lira, gold, money, pearl, bead
Time		evening, night, tomorrow, festival

People semantic domain had 81 words. The most frequently used words were Ayşe (proper name), mother and father. Moreover, it was seen that people semantic domain could be divided into three sub-groups as person, profession, relative. There

were 41 words related to animals semantic domain. The most frequently mentioned words in this domain were cat and rat. The number of the words related to body parts semantic domain was 31. Among the words related to body parts, the most frequently cited ones were hand, hair and nose. There were 15 words related to clothing semantic domain. Here the most frequently used word was fur. The number of the words related to toys semantic domain was 12. The most frequently used word in this category was folktale. There were 42 words belonging to food semantic domain. In relation to food semantic domain it was seen that in general, there were animal feed such as wheat, barley and hay. There were 62 words related to number semantic domain. In the semantic domain of number, the most frequently mentioned ones were one, two and three. There were 18 words belonging to nature semantic domain. Here, the most frequently used word was star. There were 23 words belonging to place semantic domain. Path was the most frequently used word.

When the semantic domains involved the least in the nursery rhymes were examined, it was seen that there were 2 words belonging to vehicles semantic domain; there were 3 words related to food utensils semantic domain; there were 4 words belonging to household items and utensils and musical instrument semantic domain; there were 5 words related to furniture semantic domain; there were 6 words belonging to time semantic domain; there were 7 words related to tool semantic domain and there were 10 words belonging to material semantic domain.

In addition to the name category, word diversifications related to properties and states and activities semantic domains are given in Table 4.

Table 4: Words belonging to properties and states and activities semantic domains

Semantic Domains	Word Diversification
Properties and states	long, empty, alone, raw, lazy, mini, hard-working, lovely, sweet, silvery, power, large, beautiful, short, nice, thin, rotten, curl, fresh, hole, red, yellow, bluish, white, black, dark, brunette, without a moustache
Activities	open, be opened, give a name, take, hang, jump, leave, look, press, dip, know, ride, finish, call, play (instrument), steal, work, crack, pull, go out, beat, say, fill, weave, pour, stand, fall, cause to fall, do, pass, come, bring, travel, go, get dressed, see, take away, smile, pass away by laughing, welcome, want, escape, stay, cut, neigh, put on, speak, run, chase, put, set, read, become, play, die, kiss, burst, cook, spread, sell, tease, count, choose, give regard, love, hop, ask, peel, tell, keep a promise, filter, kick, hold, fly, deal with, make up, sleep, feel cold, arrive, give, hit, rain, set fire, make, live, eat, pluck

There were 40 words in properties and states semantic domain. Here, the most frequently used words were yellow and lazy. There were 199 words in activities semantic domain. The most frequently used words here were the verbs of take, eat, come, go, become and say. These are the activities among the most frequently performed ones in daily life.

3.2. Values

Values were mentioned in fifteen out of the forty-five nursery rhymes. The parts of these nursery rhymes including values are given below.

When the nursery rhymes were examined in relation to values;

My mother has brought yoghurt
The cat dipped her nose
What should be done to this cat
It must be left without play
It is a pity for the cat
This yoghurt should be thrown away (3)

In this nursery rhyme, the cat dipping her nose into the milk is first wanted to be punished by not allowing her to play but then it is thought that it will be pity for the cat and then the sense of anger is replaced by the sense of mercy.

I said that when I arrived
Open the door, the ant
He said that I should not play the stringed
instrument
Do not be idle but work a little bit (6)

In this nursery rhyme, the ant advises the cicada to work instead of walking around idly.

Girl, I came to take you
I came to ask how you are
I came to tear your hair (8)

Why does anyone tear someone's hair when she come to ask how she is? Here violence is involved.

The six
They stole my gold (22)

Here there is an incidence of robbery.

Postman, postman
Bring a letter to the friend
Postman, postman
Give regards to the friend (23)

Stars in the sky cannot be counted
Uncooked egg cannot be peeled
Ayşe and Fatma never leave each
other alone
Never leave, never leave (25)

These two nursery rhymes give an example of loyalty between friends.

I am cold, I am cold
Oh, my dear I am cold
Put on your fur
Oh my dear, put on your fur
I do not have a fur
Oh my dear, I have no fur
Buy it, buy it
Oh my dear, buy it
I have no money, I have no money
Oh my dear, I have no money
Why don't you work
Oh my dear, why don't you work
Where from, where from
Oh my dear, where do you come
from
From the palace, from the palace

Oh my dear, from the palace
They hang and kill
They select the beautiful one (34)

Here, it is emphasized that poverty results in the act of stealing and this act of stealing is even proposed by a friend. The act of stealing is not resisted as it is a bad behavior, but because of the fear of punishment. Here, we see the values of poverty, theft, bad friend and punishment.

I kicked, kicked the warehouse
The door of the warehouse is opened,
opened (35)

Is it necessary to kick the door of the warehouse to open it? Here, violence is involved.

I wish tomorrow would be a festival
My pocket would be filled with money
I would kiss my father and mother's
hands
I kiss their hands
My brother
I love you more than my life (36)

In Turkish society, new clothes are bought for children to wear in festivals. Children are very excited in the morning of the festival day, as they will wear their new clothes, kiss the hands of their father and mother and get pocket money from them. Here, the great joy felt by children while waiting for the festival is mentioned. Moreover, this nursery rhyme expresses the respect and love felt for friend, mother and father.

Ladybug
Tomorrow there will be a wedding
My mother will buy slippers and shoes for
you (38)

Here, the value of buying new things for weddings can be seen.

The wood is rotten, it does not hold the nail
Our Ayşe, does not keep her promises (40)

Just as a rotten wood that does not hold the nail, Ayşe does not keep her words. Here the value of keeping promises is emphasized.

We have caught the fox
We have put it into the trap
We are going hunting (42)

Here, there are expressions that indicate the tendency to give harms to animals such as catching the fox and putting it into the trap. Such expressions should not be in the world of children.

Is there anyone messing up with   you
Teasing you (44)

In this nursery rhyme, the concept of violence is involved.

I peeled my orange
Put it by my side
I made up a lie (46)

In this nursery rhyme commonly used by children to select teams in plays, isn't it strange that a child peeling his/her orange puts it by his/her side? Here, the value of lying is emphasized.

I sell butter and honey
My master died and I sell
My master died, his fur is
left
I sell it for fifteen Liras
I beat beautifully (48)

In this nursery rhyme, there is an apprentice not very sad for the death of his master, disloyal, keen on money and at the same time, he wants to beat people.

4. Results and Discussion

In this study, similarities with and differences from the Clark's (1995) semantic field classification were detected. The words obtained in the name category of the current study resulted in the expansion of Clark's name category. People, semantic domain was divided into three sub-groups as person, profession and relative. In this study, in addition to people, animals, vehicles, body parts, clothing, toys, furniture, household items and utensils, food, food utensils semantic domains included in Clark's classification, number, nature, place, tool, musical instrument, material and time semantic domains emerged and thus Clark's classification was expanded.

Semantic domains presented separately in Clark's (1995) classification as furniture, household items and utensils, musical instrument were presented under a single domain called furniture semantic domain in Gökmen's (2005) classification. As opposed to the study by Clark study and this study, Gökmen also included health, disaster, form and color domains. In this study, as colors refered descriptions of words, they were given within properties and states semantic domain.

In Eken's (2015) study, on the other hand, in contrast with the study by Clark (1995) study and this study, quality, location, existentialism and health semantic domains were included. The nature, time, place and play semantic domains found in this study were different from Clark's, while exhibiting similarities to Eken's study. In this study, while profession and relate sub-semantic domains were included within people semantic domain, they were given not as the sub-domains of people but rather as separate domains in Eken's study. Moreover, while in Eken's study food and drinks semantic domains were given separately, in this study, as in Clark's, they were given as a single domain called food. Differently from Eken's study, in this study, there was the number semantic domain.

In addition to these, the nursery rhymes were analyzed in terms of the values they included. This revealed that values such as punishment, mercy, industriousness, violence, robbery, loyalty, respect, love, breaking promise, being cruel to animals, lying, and disloyalty were involved in the rhymes.

Negative values such as punishment, violence, robbery, breaking promise, being cruel to animals, lying, disloyalty may affect children's feelings negatively. It is especially worrying that such values are emphasized in culturally adopted nursery rhymes. While reciting these nursery rhymes, children may not think about their meanings but negative values can penetrate into their subconscious.

Whether they are nursery rhymes or samples of other genres, texts given to children should not include messages that can affect their world of feelings negatively. Thus, while selecting such texts, they should be analyzed carefully.

As these nursery rhymes are usually used by children in games and they are not used for educational purposes, children might not be negatively affected from their semantic fields and values. In his hypothesis, Clark (1973) stated that at first, the child does not know the complete meaning of a word and over time, he/she grasps its complete meaning. Therefore, not knowing the complete meaning of what is told and not pondering about it might keep children away from negative concepts and values.

Whether they are nursery rhymes or samples of other genres, texts given to children should not include messages that can affect their world of feelings negatively instead of messages that can have positive effects. Therefore, they should be chosen carefully. Such nursery rhymes used only in games should not be used for educational purposes in textbooks, materials, etc.

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