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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# The Concept of Environment in Folktales from Different Cultures: Analysis of Content and Visuals*

**Berat AHI****
*Kastamonu University, TURKEY*

**Dilara YAYA**
*Eskişehir Osmangazi University, TURKEY*

**Sibel OZSOY**
*Aksaray University, TURKEY*

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***Abstract***

The aim of the study is to determine how the children's stories, which are such powerful, handled the nature and environment through the texts, and were portrayed the concept of nature in different cultures. This study examined the texts in 15 children's picture stories which subjected to the perception of nature and environment, published between 1989-2002 in nine different regions of the world. The research methodology for this study is content analysis that includes methods of qualitative data collection and analysis. In this research overt and covert messages are examined deeply to try to reveal the image of the nature with its causes. As result of the content analysis 15 folktales' subjects are identified as nature-human interaction, negative attitudes towards the environment, pollution, natural life and elements of nature. Six stories focused on the interaction of nature and human beings. In general these stories are embroidered the therapeutic effect on human nature. In two tales there are messages would cause negative attitudes towards nature. The examined books present nature in different ways. In two stories there are descriptions of nature, one of them involves a number of ecological niches existing in nature, in one another story there is environmental pollution, and another story describes a day in nature. When 15 different stories which are printed in five different books' pictures are technically examined, it's seen that pictures of three books are painted with oil paint, and pictures of the other two books are drawn with watercolor. In general, despite the images describe a sentence in the text, fails to explain the scree-plot. So this situation makes think when children examining books on their own, understanding all of the text gets harder.

***Keywords*:** Nature, environmental education, child stories, pictures, qualitative research, content analysis.

## Introduction

While in the past what was seen as environmental problems were usually local problems such as disposal of wastes; particularly in years following industrial revolution, environmental problems gained a more complex and universal dimension. Today, not only the thinning of ozone layer but also decreasing bio-diversity, nuclear wastes, destruction of forestry areas without letting them renew themselves, increasing world population, destruction of natural areas and problems stemming from the plants

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*Corresponding author: Berat AHİ, E-mail: bahi@kastamonu.edu.tr

established to meet continuously increasing energy demands are among the serious problems to be solved by the humanity (Dunlap, Van Liere, Mertig & Jones, 2000; Erten, 2005; Kruger & Summers, 2000; McWhirter, Collins, Bryant, Wetton & Bishop, 2000; Meydan and Doğu, 2008). Expansion of environmental pollution at the present rate poses a serious threat to future generations. Particularly, with the Stockholm conference organized by United Nations in 1975 and International Environment Education Conference held in Tiflis in 1977, the attention of political powers, states, international and national organizations was drawn to environment and environmental problems (UNESCO, 1975; 1977). As a result of many conferences held environment education gained greater importance. In America, National Environmental Education Act (NEEA) working under the supervision of Environmental Protection Agency has spent 100 million dollars on environmental education in the last 17 years (Potter, 2010). According to Laing (2004) and Simth (2001), for these efforts to be successful, environmental education should be given to children as early as possible so that their environmental awareness can be raised.

The effects of any environmental disaster occurring in any part of the world are felt in a wide area by many people from different countries and cultures. Especially children are in need of protection in such cases. Hence, children should be educated to gain positive attitudes towards environment and knowledge about the causes and effects of environmental pollutions.

The concept of environment has gained greater popularity in the last 40 years. In 1970s, environmental education was described as education of individuals about the basic processes of nature and environment. In the following years, some other objectives such as developing strategies for environment, generating new information, educating individuals sensitive to local and universal environmental problems and that can generate solutions to these problems based on scientific facts have been assigned to environmental education. Moreover, like education in its general meaning, environmental education aims to develop positive attitudes, behaviors towards and beliefs and values about environment in individuals. In today's world, besides imparting all these skills and abilities, environmental education also aims to raise individuals' awareness of management of land utilization, endangered species, rapid population growth, solid waste management, energy utilization and conversion (Hungerford, 2010; Short, 2010).

There are many factors involved in the success of environmental education. Some of these factors are environmental education program, inclusion of environmental education in curriculums, appropriate distribution of environmental topics according to levels of the students and quality of study settings and instructors (Barraza ve Walford, 2002). All these factors can have some influences on making environmental education more quality and meaningful. It was reported that out of all the objectives set in pre-school education, 15.5% are constituted by environmental objectives (Gülay & Ekici, 2010). This is of course not enough and a desired situation. Therefore, in order to fill in the gap in environmental education, children's literature can be capitalized on. In this respect, literary works with environment-related topics can be read to children and then discussions can be performed about these topics and in this way children environmental awareness can be raised in early years.

In this regard, books dealing with the topics of nature and environment can provide important opportunities for adults to shape children's environmental attitudes. Picture books are conducive to the social, cultural, cognitive, personal and aesthetic development of children and useful educational tools helping adults teach difficult subjects to children (Dedeoğlu, Ulusoy & Lamme, 2011; Jalongo, 2004). Hence, it seems to be necessary to explain the importance of children's literature.

## Children's Literature

Children's literature is a concept including all the story books, narratives and folk tales having titles, contents or styles suitable for children. In other words, children's literature is an important part of an education system and an important tool helping children to achieve many goals set in the system (Court & Rosental, 2007). Works of children's literature should be qualified enough to help children meet their developmental, emotional and social needs. The works of children's literature should be written in a realistic language and have the characteristics necessary to support the development of children from phonetic, emotional and aesthetic aspects (Hassett, 2009). According to Sutherland (1997), children's book should have five characteristics: (a) plot of the story should be short and understandable, (b) the topic should not be extensive, (c) the level of the content should be comprehensible for children, (d) text should be simple and understandable, (e) there should be pictures and the pictures should be complementary to the text (cited in Jalongo, 2004). A properly designed and presented children's book can help children experience various feelings, become familiar with different cultures, develop various beliefs and values, and contribute their social, emotional and aesthetic development (Wasta, 2010). The studies in the literature focus on the contribution of children's books to the development of children (Gönen, Aydos & Ertürk, 2012; Güneş & Güneş, 2011; Hsiao, 2010; Jinxia, 2012; McGhee & Slutsky, 2011; Singer, 2011), selection of the suitable book for the child (Gür, 2011; Hughes, 2012), reflections of cultural differences on children's books (Malcolm & Lowery, 2011; McMath & King, 2011; McNair, 2011; Papworth, 2011), children's book publishing (Dike, 2011), investigation of children's books from different aspects (Gönen, Uygun, Erdoğan & Katrancı, 2012). However, the number of studies looking at the presentation of environment and nature in children's books is very limited. Gönen and Güler (2012) tried to determine the state of the concept of environment in books targeted to children aged at 2-12 in Turkey. In the study, it was found that in 80% of the books analyzed, the concept of environment is the main topic. Within this respect, topics such as the natural organization, seasons, nature and importance of water in life can be seen to be dealt with in the books. Out of the total 82 books analyzed, 32 are picture books. The researchers point out that children's books have direct influence on children's world of thought and emotion and emphasize the importance of increasing the number of children's books to raise the environmental awareness of future generations.

The purpose of the present study is to analyze the concept of environment as presented in international children's books from different cultures in terms of texts and pictures. As this is one of the few studies looking at this issue, it is believed to be a great contribution to the literature. Hence, the findings of the study will be of great importance.

## Methods

The present study conducted to analyze how nature is depicted in children's books from different cultures is a qualitative study with phenomenology design. Phenomenology design aims to collect detailed information about concepts we can frequently encounter in our daily life (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2008; s. 72). In the analysis of the texts and pictures in the books, content analysis-based qualitative research method is employed.

The folktales selected by the researchers are among the books recommended by National Head Start Association (NHSA) to be read during early childhood to gain some insights into how dynamic relationships between humans and nature are dealt

with from different cultural viewpoints (NHSA, 2008). In addition to this, the criteria followed by the researchers in the selection of the books are content, being from different cultures, suitability for age level, publication year, its language, quality of the visual images, opinions of experts from the field of children's literature and availability of the books.

## Study Group

### *Cultures of the Folktales*

Though environmental problems pose a threat to all cultures, each culture is subject to different environmental problems depending on geographical location and socio economic level. While drought is the most important environmental problem in Africa, nuclear pollution comes to the fore in Japan. In a study, De Pauw and Petegem (2012) proved that such differences result in differences in different cultures' perceptions of natural and environmental concepts and attitudes towards these concepts. In this regard, in the set of folktales analyzed in the present study, there are works from two hemispheres, different continents and countries. There are four folktales from America, three folktales from North American Indians, two folktales from Australian aborigines and one folktale from Tahiti, Japan, Africa, England, Ireland and Malaysia each.

The folktales were selected from among the folktales recommended by NHSA (2008). The researchers determined five different books in total. While four of the books have one folktale each, one of them includes 11 different folktales. Thus, there are totally 15 folktales analyzed. These 15 folktales constituting the study group come from nine different cultures.

### *Visuals*

In a written work, texts and visuals are complementary to each other (Feathers and Arya, 2012). In particular, in children's books the visuals gain greater importance. There is a dialogue established between the child and visuals. Through visuals, the child can understand the plot independent of the text. Moreover, a text supported with visuals can activate more than one emotion in children and thus enhance the child's interest in text (Johnston and Frazee, 2011). However, for this to happen, visuals should be designed like real works of art rather than simple graphs (Marcus, 2012). The visuals of the works analyzed in the present study were created by artists different from the writers. The visuals of the three books were painted with oil-paint and those of the two books with watercolor paint.

## Data Analysis

In the analysis of the texts and visuals of the folktales, interpretative content analysis method was employed. The content analysis aims to indirectly elicit the human's beliefs, values, attitudes and thoughts via visual, written, oral etc. materials (Balcı, 2009; Fraenkel and Wallen, 2009). Through this analysis, it is possible to gather similar data under specific concepts and themes and organize them (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2008). Before coding, all the data were analyzed by the researchers to gain some insights. Following this analysis, the folktales were encoded according to their topics and these codings were placed under common themes.

| Title of the folktale | Culture it belongs to | Theme |
|---|---|---|
| *Come On, Rain!* | American | Nature-human interaction |
| *Granny and Elder Tree Witch* | English | Negative behaviors towards nature |
| *Imprisoned in a Tree* | Australian (Aborigine) | Negative behaviors towards nature |
| *Journey to the Land of Flowers* | Australian (Aborigine) | Nature-human interaction |
| *No Problem!* | American | Environmental pollution |
| *Summer Sun Risin'* | American | Natural living |
| *The Tree in the Moon* | Tahiti | Nature-human interaction |
| *The Mystery Man of the Peonies* | Japanese | Nature-human interaction |
| *The King and Thorn Tree Bride* | African | Negative behaviors towards nature |
| *The Good Sister and Mango Tree* | Indian | Nature-human interaction |
| *The Little People and the Hawthorn Bush* | Ireland | Nature-human interaction |
| *The Bamboo Princess* | Malaysia | Descriptions of nature |
| *The Corn Maiden* | American (Indian) | Nature-human interaction |
| *Trees of Fire* | American (Indian) | Descriptions of nature |
| *Under One Rock* | American | Living things in nature |

*Table 1.* Folktales included in the study group, cultures they belong to and their themes

## Findings

As a result of the content analysis, the topics dealt with in the 15 folktales are subsumed under the themes of nature-human interaction, negative behaviors towards nature, environmental pollution, descriptions of nature, living things in nature and natural living. The themes the folktales belong to and the number of folktales in each theme are presented in Table 2.

| Theme | *f* |
|---|---|
| Nature-human interaction | 7 |
| Negative behaviors towards nature | 3 |
| Descriptions of nature | 2 |
| Environmental pollution | 1 |
| Living things in nature | 1 |
| Natural living | 1 |
| Total | 15 |

*Table 2.* The number of folktales in each theme

When table 2 is examined, it is seen that nearly half of the folktales in the study group deal with nature-human interaction and curative effect of nature on human. Three of the remaining books aim to explain the harms given to nature by humans, two of them depict the descriptions of nature and biotic and abiotic organisms in nature, one book deals with environmental pollution, one with living things in nature and their ecological niches and one with how to spend a day in nature.

***Human-Nature Interaction***

Seven of the folktales are gathered under the theme of human-nature interaction. The folktale entitled *"Come on, Rain!"* (Hesse, 1999) narrates the story of a little girl waiting for the rain together with her mother and friends on a sweltering summer day. Some dialogues in the book clearly depict the effects of hot weather on both people and plants. While the *sentence "(…) while my mother was lifting the lifeless and drouthy grapevines and vegetables, she said "even a single drop of rain has not fell for three weeks"* explains the effects of heat on plants, another sentence in a following page *"the bad smell of tar melted under the heat and litters spread around"* shows the negative effects of heat on human life. Another sentence emphasizing the effect of heat on human life is *"When I came back home, I found my mother sitting in front of the door exhausted due to heat"* another sentence says *"My mother was sitting on a chair. Front of her dress and arm pits were soaked"*. *"She seemed to be weary and exhausted"* Such sentences within the text clearly indicate that natural conditions affect all life.

The folktale named *"Journey To The Land Of Flowers"* (Kerven, 1989) narrates the adventures of an aborigine tribe visiting the mountain of aborigine God Baime to want some flower seeds as there are no flowers left. In the text, the wise man of the tribe, Oobi-Oobi says *"We have not had any flower seeds left to plant for a long time. Imagine this! No flower, no color, no scent. Therefore, people are very gloomy and uneasy"* and this shows how important plants are for human beings. *"The Tree in The Moon"* (Kerven, 1989) deals with a similar topic. In this folktale, the adventures of Hina travelling to the moon and trying very hard to bring an ostentatious banyan tree and a fig tree from the moon to the earth with the help of a parrot are told. In the folktale, Hina is admiring the banyan tree and fig tree and *says "when I saw these ostentatious*

*trees with wide trunks and the beauty of red and juicy fruits, I thought that these beauties should be carried to the world"* and with this sentence, she points out the necessity of natural beauties for human beings. The Japanese folktale *"The Mystery Man of The Peonies"* (Kerven, 1989) tells the story of Princes Aya who saw a silhouette appearing among the roses in the forest and she fell in love with him while she was preparing for her wedding. A rose was left behind by the silhouette and this rose was grown by Aya till her wedding day and after she got married, the rose withered. At the end of the story, it is said that *"While days passed by after the wedding, the rose quickly withered and died"* and though this sentence seems to be showing the power of love, it depicts human-nature interaction. A very similar plot is presented in the Indian folktale named *"The Good Sister and Mango Tree"* (Kerven, 1989). The folktale tells the story of two siblings growing a mango tree together. When the sister got married and left the house, the mango tree was not cared enough and started to fade and Kapil, the brother, felt depressed when he saw the bad state of the Mango and she came back home to take care of the tree and as a result both tree and the brother recovered. The sentences such as *"day by day the tree gets better and Kapil also gains his health."* and *"When the tree is healthy, my brother is also health and when it becomes ill, he also becomes ill. I think Kapil and Mango tree have the same soul"* provide unique samples of human-nature interaction.

In an Irish folktale "*The Little People and the Hawthorn Bush"* (Kerven, 1989), the importance of mayflower tree in the life of a farmer family and how it protected them from bad events are narrated. The idea of loading mystical duties to some certain species of trees commonly seen in many cultures is clear in this folktale. While the grandmother of farmer Tim is giving him some advice, she says *"Mayflower tree is a noble bush for poor people like us. Therefore, I am warning you. Do not think of felling it. It protects us from bad things."* and in this way, she emphasizes the link between the tree and the family. In the following pages of the folktale, Tim sells the tree due to some economic difficulties and at that moment, his child disappears. When he recalls the advice of her grandmother, he immediately plants another mayflower tree and his child is found. The last folktale within this theme is *"The Corn Maiden"* (Kerven, 1989) belonging to American Indians. The folktale tells the story of the wise man of the tribe living in arid land. One day the wise man meets a girl in a mysterious way and the girl gives him an ear of corn and teaches how to plant corn and in this way the wise man saves his tribe from hunger. The beginning sentence of the folktale gives some information about how people feed in old *times "In the old times when the world was very young, people were usually hungry. They were hunting animals and collecting wild fruits to survive. There was no one who knew how to plant corn. As there was no corn, there was not flour. And as there was no flour, there was no bread to eat."* One of the noticeable parts of the story is where corns sing to people. In the song, corns say *"Be careful, I am one of the plants feeding you, do not waste me and do not poison me"* and in this way, give some advice for today's people. In the same folktale, the things that need to be done for the corn to grow are explained from the mouth of the *corn "I am the corn. I came to feed you. Take care of me, protect me from winds. When I get mature, you can produce flour from me. Then I become bread and you can eat me. Share me with everybody. I will make you all stronger."* At the end of the folktale, some advice is given for future *"Like all the other plants, corn is sacred. But I warn you one day your children will forget this fact. The earth will go back to its days full of hunger and frustration.*"

### *Negative Behaviors towards Nature*

Within the folktales subsumed under this theme, either some living things in the nature are killed due to some reasons or frightening stories are told about them. These folktales emphasize that one should be frightened of the nature itself or elements of the nature. An English folktale *"Granny and Elder Tree Witch"* (Kerven, 1989) tells the story of a family trying to understand a theft. The family understands that there is a witch inside an elderberry and they burn the tree to kill the witch. At the end of the story, the grandmother throws a shovel of ember on the tree and burns it and then says *"I burnt the witch turned into a tree"*. An aborigine folktale *"Imprisoned in a Tree"* (Kerven, 1989) tells the story of two little aborigine children going to forest to collect some honey. These two children climb a tree and the three turns into a witch and captures the children and then children rescue themselves from the witch. There are some frightening statements in the folktale *"Every night, the witch goes to the forest and tries to hunt children to feed herself and the children caught by her are never heard of."* and at the end of the folktale *"Strange rustles and children crying are heard in the forest at nights. Who knows, the witch may be hunting".* An African folktale *"The King and Thorn Tree Bride"* (Kerven, 1989) tells the story of the discovery of the magic turning a locust tree into a woman. A young man turning a tree into a woman with this magic fell in love with the wife of the king. When the king understands the he is deceived, he says *"Remove or cut all the locus trees"* and a whole forest is destroyed.

### *Descriptions of Nature*

In the folktales gathered under this theme, features of any natural element are narrated. A Malaysian folk tale *"The Bamboo Princess"* (Kerven, 1989) tells the story of a princess stuck in a bamboo plant and a young man rescuing her. An American Indian folktale *"Trees of Fire"* (Kerven, 1989) tells the adventures of a beaver that steals the fire from tress knowing how to light fire and shares it with the other living things in the forest. In this folktale, there are many descriptions of the habitats of North American Forests.

### *Living Things in Nature*

An American folktale *"Under One Rock"* (Fredericks, 2001) describes the living things living under a simple stone and their ecologic niches. The first living thing depicted in the folktale is a wiggler described as *"an animal living in dark and humid places in summer. It ventilates the soil"*. Another living being mentioned in the folktale are ants described as *"hardworking animals carving labyrinths under the ground"*. Spiders are defined as creatures *"having eight eyes and settling in cold places"*. Insects are mentioned as *"bright and black creatures having the ability to carve runnels."* Crickets are defined as living beings *"that can make sound with their feet and seek for plant seeds to eat."* Centipedes are described as *"carnivores having sensitive senses and seeking food within mud."* The last living being mentioned in the folktale is snail. Snails are described as living beings *"covered with secretion, creeping on the ground and spending most of their time foraging for food*."

### *Environmental Pollution*

An American folktale *"No Problem"* (Morichon, 1997) tells the story of an inventor mouse, Albert. While Albert is inventing a machine to facilitate his life, a liquid waste leaks and he tries to cope with this leakage. Though Albert tries many ways to get rid of the waste such as putting it under the ground, taking it to the moon and leaving it under the ocean, the waste somehow comes back to earth. When the waste is

disposed under the ground, it kills flowers; when left under the ocean, it mixes with underground water sources and when taken to the moon, it comes back in the form of rain.

### *Natural Living*

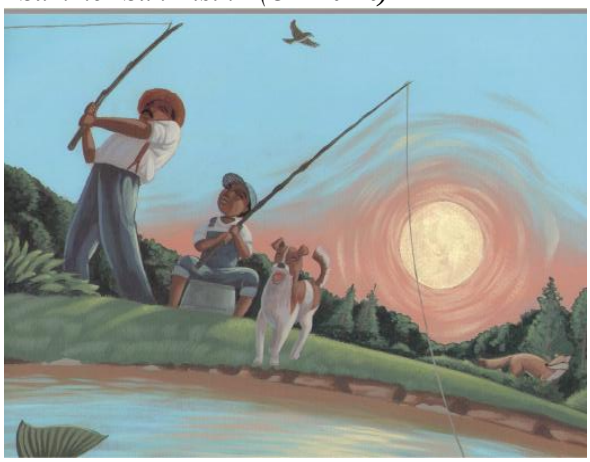
The folktale named *"Summer Sun Risin'"* (Nikola-Lisa, 2002) narrates an entertaining summer day spent in a farmhouse by an Afro-American child with his/her family. In the folktale, the child does what is needed to be done in a farmhouse in a day with his/her family and gets great pleasure from this. The child enjoys being in nature and feeding animals very much.

## Analysis of the Visuals

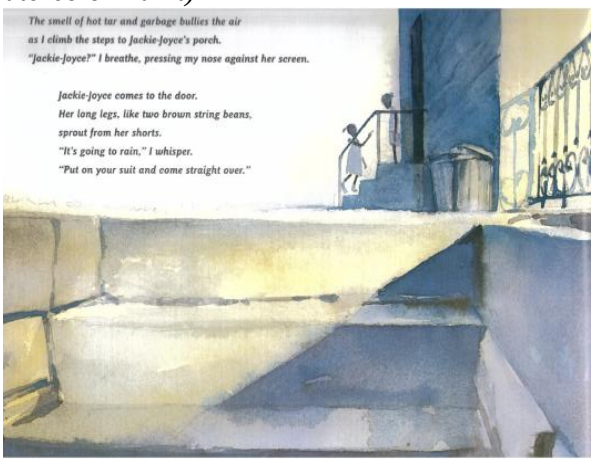
In the present study, 15 folktales belonging to nine different cultures from five books were analyzed. When the visuals accompanying the texts were examined, it was found that visuals of three books were painted with oil paint and those of two were painted with water color paint. It can be argued that the use of visuals is not very effective. Visuals are used to illustrate specific sentences in texts rather than to explain the plot of the story. This may prevent the reader from making connection between the textual content and visual content of a story. This may make difficult for the reader to understand the text. Some sample images from the books analyzed in the present study are presented below.

**Figure-1**
*Sample images from the books*

*An Example from the Images of the book called "Summer Sun Risin" (Oil Paint)*



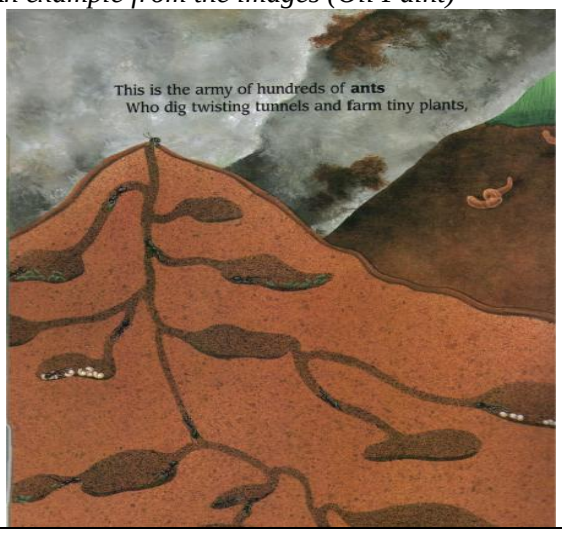
*"Come On, Rain!" An example from the images (Watercolor Paint)*



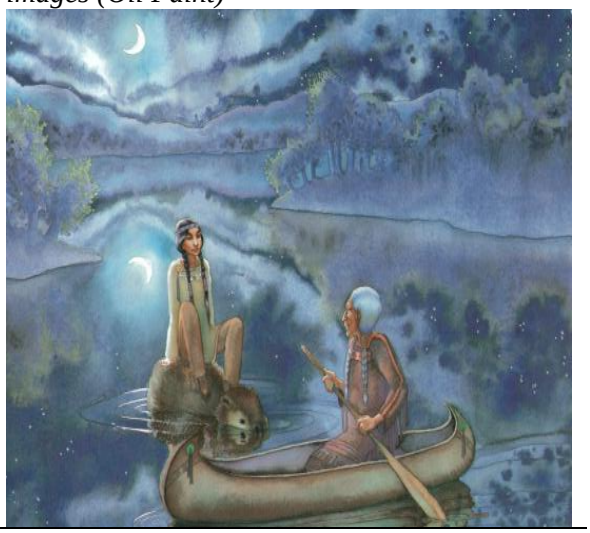

*"No Problem!" An example from the images (Watercolor Paint)*



*"Under The Rock Bugs, Slugs and Other Ughs" An example from the images (Oil Paint)*




*"The Tree in The Moon". An example from the images (Oil Paint)*



## Conclusion

Human beings are living things destroying the nature most and trying to force it to adapt to their living conditions rather than adapting to its conditions. Particularly, after II World War, with the increasing industrialization, rapid changes have been observed in the habits of people. The effects of this change on nature are negative in general. In recent years, on the other hand, deteriorating balance of the nature has led to increasing sensitivity towards environment. For sustainable environment and economic development, all states, non-governmental organizations and voluntary organizations exert great efforts. As a result of these efforts, it is clearly understood that environmental education is of great importance for sustainable development.

Environmental education is a process that should start at pre-school period and continue to the end of tertiary education. Pre-school period is the first and most important stage of environmental education. During this period, children learn mostly through games, stories and folktales. Games, stories and folktales help children to draw on their cognitive tools and learn by means of experiences on their own during this period. At the same time, while folktales reflect cultural heritages of cultures, they also reveal viewpoints of the culture they belong to about an issue with their contents. Therefore, it is important to compare and analyze folktales from different cultures.

In the present study, the purpose is to analyze folktales from different cultures in terms of their perceptions of the concepts of nature and environment. When 15 folktales from nine different cultures were analyzed, it was found that seven of the folktales deal with human-nature interaction, three of them tells stories about negative behaviors towards nature, two of them give descriptions of nature, and there is one giving information about living beings in nature, one narrates environmental pollution and one describes natural living. In the folktales gathered under the theme of human-nature interaction, the connections made by people with natural elements and their influences on each other are narrated. In these folktales, the effects of natural beauties and natural conditions on human life are explained. Moreover, in these folktales, the close relationship between nature and human beings are narrated by some striking examples such as withering trees and plants when their caretaker gets ill and then they recover with the recovery of the caregiver. Kaplan, Kaplan and Ryan found that nature has “curative” effects on humans (cited in Louv, 2010). In some of the events narrated in the folktales, great emphasis is put on the curative aspects of nature. There are some other studies in the literature supporting this finding (e.g., Taylor, Kuo and Sullivan, 2001; 2002). In three folktales, negative behaviors towards nature are narrated. In these folktales, trees are felled and destroyed. Children at pre-school period may internalize such behaviors when they read in folktales and they may want to do the same thing to satisfy their curiosity.

Another remarkable point observed in the texts is that although the folktales belonging to Aborigines and American Indians take place completely in nature and there are no elements such as city, house, car etc., in the folktales belonging to American, English and Irish cultures such elements are mentioned. The folktales of the cultures living in nature far away from urban settlements naturally take place in nature. The plants narrated in the folktales are the natural parts of the cultures. While in a Japanese folktale, emphasis is on rose, in a folktale from Malay culture bamboo tree comes to the fore, mayflower in the Irish folktale, Mango tree in the folktale belonging to Indian culture. As of their birth, children are told tales by their parents, grandparents and other family members. These experiences are important for social, emotional and cognitive developments of children and through these experiences they become informed about symbols, heroes and living patterns of their culture (Al-Jafar and

Buzzelli, 2004). It was found that each folktale analyzed has some traces of its own culture.

While some of the visuals of the folktales analyzed were painted with oil paint, visuals of the two folktales were painted with watercolor paint. It is seen that in the visuals painted with watercolor paint, details are less visible (Dedeoğlu et al., 2011). Oil paint and acrylic paint give extra shine to images. Though it is generally believed that selection of colors is important to draw the attention of children, there are some conflicting ideas in the literature. Schneider, Rivard and Debreuil (2011) stated that though colorful images are more successful in drawing children's attention, black and white images less distract children. Husband and Hayden (1996) concluded that the color of the images is not important for children. Giorgis, Johnson, Bonomo, Colbert, Conner, Kauffman and Kulesza (1999) point out the emotion activating features of colors. According to the researchers warm colors such as red and yellow are more attractive than cold colors such as blue and green. It can be claimed that in the visuals of the folktales analyzed in the present study, the use of warm colors is not dominant. Owens and Nowell (2001) investigate the children's books in terms of visual-text relationship and they found that this relationship is not very strong and visuals are used independent of the text content. This renders it difficult for the child to make contacts with the text (House and Rule, 2005).

In the folktales analyzed in the present study, the visuals were found to depict either a sentence in the text or a scene that is difficult to connect with the text in the same page rather than illustrating the plot of the story. Nikolajeva and Scott (2001) divided text-image relationships into five categories. According to this categorization, text-image relationships seen in the books analyzed in the present study can be categorized as symmetric. In a symmetric relationship, text and image tell the same thing (cited in Martinez and Harmon, 2012). A symmetric relationship may help the child understand the text in the related page but does not contribute to the understanding of the plot. This may result in limited contribution of folktales to cognitive development of the child. Though the images of the books analyzed in the present study include a physical movement, they include characters not commonly seen in daily life. House and Rule (2005) emphasized the importance of inclusion of a character that can be encountered in daily life in images. However, as the focal point of the current study is folktales, extraordinary situations in the plot are regarded to be normal.

Environment and nature are the concepts important to all cultures. Education of children who are environmental friendly, sensitive to environment and voluntary to do something for environment should be a common target of all cultures. The permanence of the information acquired in childhood is high. Hence, children should be introduced to folktales, stories and images having environmental or natural themes in early periods and this is expected to lead to their developing positive attitudes towards environment.

In the international arena, paucity of folktales and stories with environmental themes urge authors and publishers to publish more. When the importance of children's books is considered, it is very natural for the stakeholders in the field to be more interested in children's books. Veziroğlu and Gönen (2012) draw attention to the fact that there is a paucity of children's books aiming to give environmental education. Turkish publishers should invest efforts to fill in this gap.

Supporting of texts with images is an important issue. The images of children's books should be painted by artists. And these artists should be knowledgeable about the function and importance of images in the book. In addition, the artist should be able to look at images from the eye of a child.

The limitations of the current study are the number of the books analyzed and cultural diversity. Future research may look at more books from different cultures. The increase in the numbers of books and cultures may have greater contribution to the field. In the current study folktales written in English were analyzed. Investigation of Turkish works can be important.

## Biographical statement

**Berat AHI** is PhD student in the Institue of Education Science in Gazi University in Turkey and research assistant in Kastamonu University. He is interested in education for sustainability in early childhood education, environmental education. E-mail: bahi@kastamonu.edu.tr

**Dilara YAYA** is currently a research assistant in Eskişehir Osmangazi University in Turkey. She is interested in early childhood education quality. E-mail: ydilara@gmail.com

**Sibel OZSOY** PhD, associate professor in the Faculty of Education in Aksaray University in Turkey. She is interested environmental education, sustainability, education for sustainabilty and environmental literacy. E-mail: ozsoy.sibel@gmail.com

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RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Farklı Kültürlere Ait Masallarda Çevre Kavramı: İçerik ve Görsellerin Analizi

**Berat AHI****
*Kastamonu Üniversitesi, TÜRKİYE*

**Dilara YAYA**
*Eskişehir Osmangazi Üniversitesi, TÜRKİYE*

**Sibel OZSOY**
*Aksaray Üniversitesi, TÜRKİYE*

**Özet**

Bu araştırmanın amacı farklı kültürde yer alan çocuk masallarının doğa ve çevre kavramlarını nasıl yansıttıklarını metinler ve görsellerden yola çıkarak belirlemeye çalışmaktır. Araştırma kapsamında 1989-2002 yılları arasında basılmış ana teması çevre ve doğa olan 15 çocuk masalı incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın yöntemi nitel veri analizi tekniklerinden olan içerik analizidir. Araştırmada masalların açık ve gizil mesajlarını derinlemesine ortaya çıkarmak amacıyla görseller de incelenmiştir. Yapılan içerik analizi sonucunda incelenen 15 masaldan doğa-insan etkileşimi, çevreye yönelik olumsuz tutum, kirlilik, doğal yaşam ve doğanın ögeleri temaları tespit edilmiştir. Altı masal doğa-insan etkileşimi teması içerisinde yer almıştır. Genel olarak bu temada yer alan masallarda doğanın sağaltıcı etkisi üzerinde durulmuştur. İki masal çevreye yönelik olumsuz tutum teması içerisinde yer almaktadır. İncelenen kitaplar doğayı farklı yollarla sunmuşlardır. İki masal doğa hakkında açıklamalara, bir masal doğanın ekolojik niş olma özelliği üzerine durmaktadır. Bir başka masal çevresel kirlenmeye, bir diğeri ise doğada geçen bir gün üzerine durmaktadır. Beş farklı kitaptan elde edilen 15 masalın resimleri teknik olarak incelenmiştir. Üç kitaptaki resimler yağlı boya ile geriye kalan iki kitap ise suluboya tekniği ile resmedilmiştir. Genel olarak resimler olay örgüsünü açıklamakta başarısızdır. Çoğunlukla görseller bir cümleyi açıklar niteliktedir. Bu durumdan yola çıkarak çocukların görselleri kendileri incelediğinde metni anlamasının zor olacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Doğa, çevre eğitimi, çocuk masalları, resimler, nitel araştırma, içerik analizi.

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*Corresponding author: Berat AHİ, E-mail: bahi@kastamonu.edu.tr