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# A Study on the Depiction of Disability in Illustrated Story Books

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## Abstract

The aim of the present study is to examine illustrated storybooks depicting people with disabilities, in terms of their content and the type of disabilities they feature and to analyze the disabilities in the books that could be reached. The study was carried out in the survey design. Within the scope of the study, three largest bookstores in Ankara, Turkey and the websites offering online book shopping were surveyed and 234 illustrated story books were reviewed. Among these books, 30 illustrated storybooks, which depict people with disabilities, were included in the study. In order to examine the characters with illnesses and disabilities in the illustrated books, the study employed “the Checklist to be used for Analysis of Children’s Literature that includes People with Disabilities used in Inclusive Education”, which was developed by Blaska. Although some examples found by the study results were rather negative, there are still some illustrated storybooks that depict disability correctly and help children respect people with disabilities by providing them with appropriate understanding of people with disabilities and disabilities themselves. However, despite the increase, it was seen that the number of books in this field is not sufficient.

*Keywords:* concept of disability, disability analysis, children’s literature, illustrated storybooks, pre-school period.

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## Introduction

In the preschool period, in order to build their reading, writing and thinking skills, it is essential to use books that have different features for children (Ural, 2013). One of these different types of books is children's books that are written with special intentions. Books written with special intentions fall into the self-help group and the concept of self help refers to individuals' dealing with their emotional or personal problems without receiving professional help (Isitan, 2013: 159). These books, which are used in preschool education by many educators as well, are quite helpful for children to understand important subjects better (Pardeck & Pardeck, 1998). One of these subjects is the concept of disability. The number of individuals with disabilities in the world and in our country is too high to be ignored. Providing children with special needs with the opportunity of education in inclusive classes has brought about the necessity to create awareness of disabilities and understand children with disabilities for other students and teachers (Dyches, Prater & Jenson, 2006). One of the most effective tools of telling an able-bodied child about disabilities is children's literature (Andrews, 1998; Dyches, Prater & Jenson, 2006; Johnson, 2010; Rieger, 2010). Nowadays, many storywriters write books including characters with disabilities. The books help children understand that not everyone is perfect and that differences make individuals unique and special (Johnson, 2010). In a general sense, educators use these books to teach being disabled, practice bibliotherapy and to raise awareness, understanding and social acceptance of disabilities (Dyches & Prater, 2000; Prater, Dyches & Johnstun, 2006; Adiguzel, 2011). Many children with disabilities enjoy reading books thanks to books that portray similar characters to themselves. In addition, as they see the similarities between themselves and the disabled characters in the books that portray realities and strengths of individuals, they feel less lonely, their personal development is supported and self-esteem and self-confidence is improved (Campbell, 2006; Wopperer, 2011). According to Prater, Dyches and Johnstun (2006), books including characters with disabilities are not only important for children with disabilities but also for children and adolescents with no disabilities to be aware of their disabled peers and accept them with their disabilities. Thanks to these books, they learn about the similarities between their own feelings and those of the disabled characters in the books, recognize difficulties that individuals with disabilities may encounter in their daily lives; that is, they learn to show empathy. Blaska (2003) suggests that teachers should include books portraying characters with disabilities in their curriculum whether there are children with disabilities in their classes or not. It is rather important that while they are choosing the books, teachers should pay attention to the intended use of the book and the depiction of characters with disabilities. The subject should not directly address disabilities; the characters must be realistic; the storyline must pull the reader in; events must be simple and understandable and reflect children's

perspectives; the author must use a simple literary style addressing the disability group included as the book's topic. As for the illustrations, they must be suitable for the target age group, support the topic, be influencing and artistically valuable (Bland, 2013; Prater, Dyches & Johnstun, 2006)

The related literature abroad seems to be quite rich in studies carried out on the inclusion of the concept of disability in children's storybooks. Blaska's "The Use of Children's Books in Learning about Illnesses and Disability" serves as a valuable resource book for everyone working with young children. In the book, Blaska explains why it is important to be informed about disability and illnesses during early childhood and later touches on the role of books in teaching differences. In the article in which Andrews (1998) gives information about the children's literature to be used in developing positive attitudes and behaviors towards disabilities, he mentions the role of the teacher points to be considered when choosing the books and classroom practices and presents a list of books on disabilities at the end of the study. In their study, Dyches and Prater (2005) analyzed both illustrated story books and storybooks intended for 7-10 year-olds published between 1999 and 2003 and tried to identify the characters with developmental disabilities in these books as the first step. In another study, Dyches, Prater and Jenson (2006), examined the concept of disability on Caldecott books and evaluated 11 Caldecott books in terms of their dates of publication, summaries, disability related analyses and teaching clues for each book. Prater (2000) listed 46 children's books with their author names, publishers, dates of publication and short summaries. Moreover, Prater's study also included the target age group of these 46 books, disabilities and the topic dealt with by the book and classroom practices on disability. In the study carried out by Kaiser (2007) on how up-to-date story books are and how much they cover disabilities, 300 books written on children with disabilities were listed specifying the categories and sub-categories of disability. In their study titled "Understanding Disabilities through Children's Literature" Kurttis and Gavigan (2008) looked at how teachers could employ children's and young adult literature in developing an understanding in individual differences using bibliotherapy approach. The study also includes a list of children's books written on children with special needs and addresses for related websites. Johnson (2010) studied how physical and mental disability is dealt in children's literature and with reference to the cited book analyses; he claims that children are perfect tools to understand children with disabilities and their parents.

On the other hand, concerning determination and analyses of the books including disability among children's books in Turkey, Isitan (2013) reports that A. Gurdal Unal (2011) carried out a study between 1969 and 2009 and found seven books for pre-school level including characters with disabilities. Moreover, Ozkardes (2013) reached 128 publications in the study that examined books published about different developing children in Turkey. She found that these 128 publications mainly focused on autism, attention deficit and hyperactivity; the books

served as reference books; they were designed for adults and were Turkish works and that the number of books intended for children was too limited and most of them were translated works. It can be seen that there are many studies carried out abroad on informing the society and individuals about individuals with special needs, increasing awareness and the challenges experienced by these individuals and their families as well as their struggle against these difficulties (Ozkardes, 2013). The number of studies concerning individuals with special needs has increased recently in comparison with the past; however, the limited number of storybooks included the studies carried out in this field is noticeable. Işıtan (2013) states that there are only a limited number of storybooks portraying disabilities in Turkey and that they are insufficient in terms of content and quality. The topic of the present study results from this requirement. The present study aims at examining illustrated storybooks that portray people with disabilities in terms of their physical features, topics and the types of disabilities they include and analyzing disabilities in the books that could be reached.

In order to attain the main purpose, the study seeks to answer following sub-purpose questions: (1) What is the distribution of illustrated storybooks portraying people with disabilities in terms of content, language and illustration? (2) What is the distribution of disabilities and illnesses included by illustrated storybooks portraying people with disabilities?

## **Method**

### ***Research Design and Study Group***

The study was conducted in a survey design. “Studies indented to collect data in order to determine certain characteristics of a specific group are classified as *survey studies*” (Buyukozturk, Çakmak, Akgun, Karadeniz & Demirel, 2013: 14). The reason for choosing survey design for this study is that it examines illustrated storybooks that portray people with disabilities in terms of their physical features, topics and the types of disabilities they include and analyzes disabilities in the books that could be reached. For the purposes of the study, three largest bookstores in Ankara, Turkey (Ymge, Dost and Remzi) and online bookshops were surveyed, 234 illustrated storybooks were reviewed and eventually 30 illustrated story books including portrays of people with disabilities were included in the scope of the study.

### ***Limitations***

The data of the present study are limited to those obtained from the storybooks reached at the three largest bookstores in Ankara, Turkey and websites offering online book shopping. The scope of the study included illustrated storybooks and fairy tale based books that targeted early childhood period only. Illustrated storybooks published from 2006 on were reached within the scope of the study.

### ***Data Collection Tools***

In order to examine the characters with disabilities and illnesses in the illustrated storybooks, the study employed “The Checklist for Analysis of Children’s Literature that includes People with Disabilities used in Inclusive Education” was developed by Blaska (2003: 199). The structured checklist consists of 10 items. These items focus on the topic, language and illustrations of the book and each has evaluation criteria to be responded as “yes”, “no”, “neither”.

### ***Data Collection and Analysis***

In line with the aim of the study, 234 illustrated storybooks on the market were reviewed first for characters with disabilities and 30 of these books were included in the analysis of the study. Following this, each book was read to analyze the characters. During analysis, it was seen that some books did not have a character with disabilities but included disability in other ways. Characteristics such as clumsiness, temporary deficits (wearing glasses, nearsightedness etc.), causing problems having no obvious disability were included within the scope of the study. Some books were selected among those focusing on the same disability or differences and their topics and disability analyses were included. The data obtained from the 30 books reviewed were analyzed using descriptive statistics. As a result of the analyses, tables relating each research question were organized as frequency and percentage distributions of the data and presented in tables in the findings section.

## Results

Some of the 30 illustrated storybooks included in the study are presented with examples of issues dealt with such as disabilities, illnesses and differences and content analyses.

### ***Snow white and the seven dwarfs***

*Story Plot:* A beautiful girl, Snow White is sent into the forest by her jealous mother, the wicked Queen, to be killed by a hunter. She is saved by a group of seven adorable dwarfs and lives in the depth of the forest until her mother finds her (Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs, 2006).

*Disability Analysis:* In this story, seven men are physically dwarfs and they are portrayed realistically in the illustrations. Suitable with their physical qualities, they live in a tiny house in contrast to normal humans and have very small beds. The dwarfs' accepting Snow White, who is much bigger than themselves, to live with them and living happily support the acceptance of physical differences.

### ***It's called dyslexia***

*Story Plot:* The story presents the problems of a boy who has difficulty in reading and feels so upset about this and his life that changes when he learns he has dyslexia (Moore-Mallinos, 2008).

*Disability Analysis:* As the protagonist the boy who has dyslexia tells us about the problems he has and the feelings caused by this situation. When it is realized that he has dyslexia, he relaxes to learn how he can manage to read and learns how to deal with this. At the end of the book, the misery he has at the beginning is replaced by happiness when his one special ability is discovered. In addition to discovering his ability to write poems, the story also finalizes with examples of scientists and artists with dyslexia. Failure is turned into achievement at the end of the story. In the notes to parents section, the book provides information about dyslexia for families.

### ***Is Hamdi happy to be tall?***

*Story Plot:* The story is about the daily problems of Hamdi who is much taller than his peers and continues to grow taller. He is frozen out by his friends because of being too tall and tries to find his way to prevent growing taller in misery. One day, when he goes to the doctor and the doctor says "Look how well you have grown, it is certain that you will be a great giant man in the future" and his life starts to change (Doinet, 2009a).

*Disability Analysis:* The book includes physical differences –being too tall-. Although the book does not deal with disability directly, it is important as it explains how to use differences positively and turn them into advantages, and supports the ability to respect and accept differences.

### ***Why does Hamdi wear glasses?***

*Story Plot:* Because of his poor eyesight, Hamdi has difficulty reading books; his eye get watery and gets headaches when studying. However, he is unwilling to wear glasses as he thinks his friends will make fun of him (Doinet, 2009b).

*Disability Analysis:* The protagonist Hamdi has problems with his ability to see. His poor eyesight makes affects his life negatively. Although the problem is solved with glasses the feeling that he would be made fun of or frozen by his friends shows the effects of social pressure. At the end of the book, the story highlights how happy individuals with disabilities or defects feel when they are accepted as who they are by the others.

### ***Tombak the prominent ear***

*Story Plot:* A baby elephant living in the forest in India does not have teeth yet but has big ears. The baby elephant uses these big ears to protect its friends when it rains (Dufresne, 2011).

*Disability Analysis:* The story deals with a baby elephant which is teased by its friends because of its big and prominent ears. Even though the baby elephant is made fun of many other animals because of this abnormality in its ears, it does not care about this and takes advantage of its big ears by protecting its friends under its ears when it rains. The elephant's not accepting this difference as negative and not caring about other animals and its use of this difference in a positive way give readers positive messages.

### ***I have asthma***

*Story Plot:* The story is about a child with asthma. It is explained that the illness, which causes frightening attacks at times and may make breathing difficult can only be controlled by using drugs (Moore-Mallinos, 2011a).

*Disability Analysis:* The book includes symptoms of asthma, problems caused by the diseases and ways of treatment in detail. Body organs and the drugs used are introduced to the reader with illustrations. The activity to make a puffer bag and research questions included at the end of the book strengthens children's knowledge and detailed information and things to consider about asthma given in the notes to parents section serves as a guide of particular importance.

### ***It's Ok to be me***

*Story Plot:* A wheel chaired child is really at peace with his disability and manages to do many things despite his disability (Moore-Mallinos, 2011d).

*Disability Analysis:* The story is told by the protagonist. He expresses his feelings about being wheel chaired in a positive way by saying "I am never alone; my wheel chair is always with me". While explaining that his disability is not an obstacle for him to achieve many things, he also touches on some difficulties he experiences. The fact that he tells the readers about his disability in a positive perspective helps them to accept their friends or other people with this disability more easily. The back page activity "put yourself into others' shoes" encourages children to show empathy as well.

### ***Everyone matters***

*Story Plot:* The book tells children about respect for differences. It focuses on the meaning of the word respect, its importance in our society and the contributions of showing respect. The term respect is dealt with in several different areas such as respecting older and younger people, friends, animals and other's opinions (Thomas, 2011).

*Disability Analysis:* The focus of the book is not on the concept of disability. It does not include a specific disability. However, in the pages where respect for differences is mentioned, the portrayal of a wheel chaired child and other children helping him underlines the need for individuals with disabilities.

### ***I am deaf***

*Story Plot:* The book tells the story of 10-year-old Lana describing some things that are helpful for her education at school, and how she communicates with her friends and teachers. While she is speaking sign language with a friend at school, she realizes that her friends are watching them and she comes up with an idea. With this idea, she can communicate better with children with hearing disabilities and other children (Moore-Mallinos, 2011b).

*Disability Analysis:* The man character of the book is hearing impaired and she describes her disability and gives information about her own life. She does not regard disability as a problem or a disruption in her life, but she rather states that she can do everything that other children do despite her disability and encourages acceptance instead of denial. This could be seen in her words "My hearing impairment doesn't mean that I can't do what my peers do; I can do many sports and I love reading." The only difference from others is my hearing impairment." With the expressions "Have you ever imagined what it would be like if you

couldn't hear anything? Imagine how quiet it would be." she invites the reader to empathize. In addition to this, information is provided about sign language and ways of treatment as well. The information and sign language alphabet included in the notes to parents section attached to the end of the book is a good guide for families.

### ***I can't sit still***

*Story Plot:* The story of Luka, who has attention-deficit disorder, describes how he can overcome ADHD and life becomes easier and more enjoyable after this little boy learns how to control this disease (Pollack & Belsivo, 2011).

*Disability Analysis:* The main character is a child with ADHD and he tells the difficulties he experiences. His friends freeze him because of his unavoidable behavior. Since the book describes the symptoms of ADHD, the reasons for the problematic behavior from the child's narration, it helps children who read the book to understand their friends who have similar symptoms better and to fit in with them instead of freezing them. Sample activities and notes to parents section at the end of the book include information about ADHD and examples of treatment methods.

### ***I have a friend with Down syndrome***

*Story Plot:* The book tells the story of two children who meet at a summer camp and build a close relation although one of them has Down syndrome. Both children learn that everyone can be good at something; that they can overcome their fears and difficulties and achieve success by helping each other (Moore-Mallinos, 2011c).

*Disability Analysis:* The story explains that the children first stayed away from the child with Down syndrome and shows how they became good friends later. It also states that there are areas in which people with Down syndrome can be successful and it is not an obstacle for them to be good friends. The story has a good content that encourages to include children with disabilities instead of excluding them. The emphasis made on the success of the disabled child helps to show them positive attitudes. Information about Down syndrome shared in the notes to parents section makes a good guide for families.

### ***My world***

*Story Plot:* The story presents experiences of a child with hearing impairment, his feelings, moments that make him happy and events that make him sad (Ali, 2012).

*Disability Analysis:* The disability is not clearly stated in the book. One can understand the character has hearing impairment from the behavior he could and could not perform and his descriptions. For instance, "I love my quiet world, there is no noise at all. I feel alone in crowded places where people are laughing. Daddy tells my memories in a way that I can understand" etc. With his sentences "Sometimes children point their fingers at me, I don't understand what they want" he explains that he is excluded by his peers because of his disability but is happy with his friends who have similar conditions to his. The expression "Neither noise nor chaos exists in my world, mine is a quiet and peaceful world." shows that the disability is considered as an accepted and pleasing phenomenon rather than being negative.

### ***All colors of the rainbow***

*Story Plot:* In the book, children express that although people have many different qualities such as physical features, clothing styles, life styles, languages, feelings, ideas and hopes of all people and children are similar to each other. People are compared to the different colors of a rainbow and differences are emphasized by stating that a rainbow can be formed by different colors coming together (Moore-Mallinos, 2012).

*Disability Analysis:* The book does not deal with a particular disability; however, it focuses on individual differences, which is related to disability. Statements such as "Let's celebrate our differences." or "Let's appreciate our uniqueness." Promotes appreciating differences instead of abstaining from them.

### ***Elbows don't lie***

*Story Plot:* Fati is visually impaired and has difficulty in travelling to school. The story describes how he makes friends and how he lives his eyes shut (Kuralay, 2013).

*Disability Analysis:* A visually impaired child Fati asks the school director, who does not want him in the school, "There are also things that you can't see, for example, can you see the wall's friend? Aren't you visually disabled in a way?" and makes him feel empathy. Finally, important information is provided about the significance of holding from elbows for visually impaired individuals. The section "what did you learn?" and "Fati has questions for you" at the end of the book is important in terms of reinforcing the issues dealt with about visual impairment.

### ***The fox who lost his memory***

*Story Plot:* The author dwells upon the themes of Alzheimer and amnesia. Intended for both children and families, the book won the German Children's Literature Award in 2011. How the fox loses his memory in time and how his new condition puts him in danger at times is expressed in an impressive way highlighted with illustrations (Baltscheit, 2013).

*Disability Analysis:* The story deals with the effects of getting old and Alzheimer's Disease and the changes they cause in people; and by portraying how younger foxes support and protect the main character, it shows how the greatest disabilities can be overcome easily when one is not alone. The book gently tells children about the social responsibilities generations should undertake for each other.

In the following parts of the study, the books reviewed are analyzed in terms of their physical and content related properties and are assessed through descriptive analyses.

Table 1. *Distribution of Illustrated Storybooks Including People with Disabilities in terms of their Content and Illustrations*

Items	Yes		No		Neither	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
1. Promotes empathy not sympathy.	18	60	12	40	0	0
2. Describes accepting not teasing.	24	80	1	3.3	5	16.7
3. Focuses on success rather than failure.	18	60	1	3.3	11	36.7
4. Supports positive images of people with disabilities.	22	73.7	3	10	5	16.7
5. Help children to have correct understanding of disability.	16	53.3	6	20	8	26.7
6. Respects people with disabilities.	18	60	12	40	0	0
7. Supports the attitude of "One of us" not "one of them".	24	80	1	3.3	5	16.7
8. The language used lays the primary emphasis on the main character and the secondary emphasis on the disability.	19	63.3	11	36.7	0	0
9. Describes the person with disability or the disability itself realistically (neither as superior nor helpless people).	25	83.3	4	13.3	1	3.3
10. Characters are illustrated realistically.	29	96.7	1	3.3	0	0

In Table 1, it can be seen that 60% of the illustrated storybooks including people with disabilities promote empathy but not sympathy; 80% of them describe accepting not teasing, 60% focus on success rather than failure; 73.7% support positive images of people with disabilities; 53.3% help children to have correct understanding of disability; 60% respect people with disabilities; 80% support the attitude of “One of us” instead of “One of them”; 63.3% use a language that lays the primary emphasis on the main character and the secondary emphasis on the disability; 83.3% describe the person with disability or the disability itself realistically; and 96.7% illustrate their characters realistically.

Table 2. *Distribution of Disabilities and Illnesses in Illustrated Storybooks including People with Disabilities*

		n	%
Disabilities	Physical disability	2	6.7
	Visual disability	2	6.7
	Hearing disability	2	6.7
	Dyslexia	1	3.3
	Down Syndrome	1	3.3
	ADHD	3	10
	Giant-dwarf	4	13.3
	Eye diseases (Farsightedness, wearing glasses etc)	5	16.7
	Asthma	1	3.3
	Diseases related with aging	4	13.3
	Differences	5	16.7
Total	30	100	

In Table 2, the distribution of disabilities and illnesses in illustrated storybooks including people with disabilities shows that 16.7% of the illustrated story books focus on differences (respect for differences), and similarly 16.7% highlight eye diseases (farsightedness, wearing glasses etc.). It can also be seen that 13.3% of the illustrated storybooks are those emphasizing diseases related with aging (Alzheimer, amnesia, slowness of physical movements etc.) and 13.3% deal with dwarfism and gigantism.

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## Discussion

In this section, findings obtained from the analyses of illustrated storybooks including people with disabilities are discussed considering the main research question. In the distribution of illustrated storybooks including people with disabilities in terms of their content, language and illustrations (Blaska, 2003) it can be seen that 60% of the books “*promote empathy but not sympathy*”. In a similar study, Rieger (2010) reviewed 52 books and stated that 39 of them underpinned empathy as their theme. According to Rieger (2010), participation of characters with illnesses or disabilities in shared activities with their friends for several reasons support the feeling of empathy. Prater, Dyches and Johnstun (2006) claim that when given a chance to learn indirectly through experiences of disabled characters, the reader can have a perspective about the struggles that people with such disabilities face when making friends or achieving academic goals at school. The fact that the characters in books are not afraid of reflecting their feelings about their disabilities creates awareness for others and thus promotes empathy (Rieger, 2010).

Young children may be puzzled when they see people with disabilities. Even young children who have disabilities themselves may feel afraid when they encounter someone with a different disability from theirs. Reading and listening to books is a way of teaching children to feel comfortable with people with disabilities (Campbell, 2006). Recognizing differences and accepting one’s own feelings and attitudes as well require emotional participation. Most individuals are aware of differences among people and can understand the nature of certain disabilities but may never fully accept people who are different from themselves. Books can be strong sources to teach how to accept their shortcomings, feelings and behaviors towards others (Prater, Dyches & Johnstun, 2006). It was concluded in the present study that 80% of the storybooks reviewed “*describe accepting not teasing*”. 60% of the illustrated storybooks including characters with disabilities were found to “*focus on success rather than failure*”. The characters with disabilities included in the books have to solve their problems without the help of adults (Prater, Dyches and Johnstun, 2006). In fact, regardless of disability, all characters should be described as individuals who can independently solve their problems in books intended for children (Wopperer, 2011). Another finding of the present study is that 73.7% of the illustrated storybooks including people with disabilities “*support positive images of people with disabilities*”. Likewise, in their study which examined Newberry books Leininger, Dyches, Prater and Heath (2010) suggested that the depiction of disabilities was generally positive. In another study supporting this finding, Dyches and Prater (2005) found that 72% of the 26 characters in the books reviewed had been depicted positively. According to researchers, positive depictions emphasize strengths of characters instead of their weaknesses. In these positive depictions, characters with disabilities should

be accepted at home and in the society. Contrary to these findings, on the other hand, Beckett, Ellison, Barrett, and Shaw (2010) reviewed 100 books describing disability for first grade students in England. They searched the books for positive depictions or negative clichés and found negative descriptions of disability in 86 of the 100 books. These negative descriptions included a problematic language, miserable appearance of the disabled character, unrealistic happy endings, curiosity raised by the disabled characters and use of disabled characters for moral purposes. 53.3% of the illustrated story books including characters with disabilities that were reviewed within the scope of the present study support the category of *“helping children to have correct understanding of disability”*. Similarly, Rieger (2010) stated that in 40 of the 52 books reviewed by prospective teachers strengths and weaknesses of the disabled characters were explained in a balanced way. 60% of the books reviewed were found to *“respect people with disabilities”*. An indicator of this conclusion is that the disabled characters in the books fulfill the same tasks and activities as their able-bodied peers (Rieger, 2010). Andrews (1998) suggest that instead of including negative and wrong clichés about disability, characters that can help feelings and opinions to be understood should be presented in books that include characters with disabilities. Disability should not be used to create an unwanted mercy and sympathy. Illustrated storybooks should not focus on disability alone. Instead, main characteristics of the disability should be revealed naturally through the story. Ordinary life problems such as being friends, meeting, conflicts with parents and siblings are much more attractive and universal (Andrews, 1998).

80% of the books reviewed within the scope of the present study were found to support the attitude of *“One of us, not one of them”*. Participation of the disabled characters in activities that are suitable for their development and age supports the description of *“one of us”* (Rieger, 2010). In illustrated books including characters with disabilities the language should *“lay the primary emphasis on the character and the secondary emphasis on the disability”*. 63.3% of the books reviewed in the present study support this category. According to Campbell (2006), when describing characters with disabilities, an appropriate language must be used. In order to respect individuals with disabilities, the story must be narrated by the first person. This is primarily meant to express individualism and later to express the disability, if needed, by using words respectfully (Blaska, 2003). Characters with disabilities included in books should be depicted and described as individuals who can deal with difficulties and have dreams, abilities and desires. Right after this, some information must be provided about obstacles and difficulties that the characters face in their lives (Rieger, 2010). Another finding obtained from the analysis of illustrated books including characters with disabilities is that 83.3% of the books *“describe the person with disabilities or the disability itself realistically”*. Likewise, Dyches and Prater (2005) examined illustrated books including characters with disabilities and found that in 78% of

the books, descriptions designed for disabled characters included realistic information and skills. Characters with disabilities should not be stereotyped or revealed as sympathized objects and they must not be introduced as magic, heroic or extraordinary characters (Beckett, Ellison, Barrett, and Shaw, 2010). Illustrated storybooks are books that tell stories through pictures either accompanied by texts or not. A quality drawing may interpret the story. By reading the illustrations, children can retell stories. Pictures and illustrations included in these books must be suitable for children's age (Dyches & Prater, 2000). Quality drawing develops the story and depicts the disability realistically. For example, when illustrating a character with learning disability, the physical appearance of the character must not be different from any other person (Prater, Dyches & Johnstun, 2006). 96.7% of the books included in the present study were found to “*depict their characters realistically*”.

Although the books included within the scope of the study are not given in a table, they were also examined in terms of their dates of publication and whether they are translated or in their original language. The results obtained concerning their dates of publications showed that illustrated storybooks including the concept of disability have mostly been published only recently. The number of books including the concept of disability has particularly increased since 2011 (9 books in 2011, 5 books in 2012 and 8 books in 2013). This may be due to the increased effort in raising awareness for the concept of disability in early childhood and individuals with special needs.

It was also seen that storybooks including disability related subjects are mostly (73.3%). translated books of foreign origins. This shows the fact that fewer studies are carried out in Turkey than those conducted abroad. The limited number of illustrated storybooks translated into Turkish is also noticeable. Except for one book, in all books included in the study texts and illustrations were associated with each other. As for the distribution of disabilities and illnesses included in the illustrated storybooks, physical differences such as eye diseases, attention deficit and hyperactivity, and giants-dwarfs were found to be mentioned more often. However, it is remarkable that there are no books on conditions like speech and language disorders and mental disabilities, which are seen more commonly at schools. While most of these books including disabilities and illnesses were published by Tubitak the fact that no books could be found on these topics by most publishing companies in pre-school education, which are referred to more often by institutions of pre-school education, is considered to be remarkable and a big shortcoming.

## Conclusion

In this study, illustrated storybooks which include disabilities that were published in Turkey were analyzed. Although negative examples were found, most of the storybooks described disabilities correctly. These books have been found to support children to gain a rightful understanding and respect towards disabled people and disabilities. On the back cover of some of these books there are information about the type of disability and suggestions for the families which gives the idea to consider these books also as source books. It is seen that the subjects are focused on certain types of disabilities. Common disabilities seen in schools (speech disorder, mental disability etc.) not being mentioned is seen as a significant deficiency. When the publishing years are analyzed, it is seen that the illustrated storybooks which refer to the concept of disability are mostly published during the recent years. Even though the numbers of these books continue to increase, they are not sufficient enough. There is especially more need of national storybooks which are aimed at preschool children and handle different types of disabilities.

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