

## A FRAMEWORK TO ANALYSE YOUNG CHILDREN'S NARRATIVES\*

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### ABSTRACT

*Narrative skills are important because of three reasons; first, narratives are a useful tool for the development of oral language (Standler & Ward, 2005). Second, narrative language skills are closely related with children's academic success and literacy development (Fang, 2001). Third, narratives are accepted as a part of cognitive domain since they require some degree of cognitive development such as memory, language and logical reasoning abilities (Stein & Albro, 1997). Story length, narrative structure, children's inclusion types and frequency of evaluative devices in their narratives are outstanding dimensions of narrative. As such, the present study offers frame work to investigate children's narrative by focusing on the story length, story grammar (Labov,1972) and evaluative function of narratives (Peterson & McCabe, 1983 cited in Kang, 2003). The Early Childhood Curriculum prepared by the Ministry of National Education focuses on educating children who can express their ideas freely, retell story, and compose meaningful stories, creating relationships among picture, object, and events (MONE, 2012). Thus, it can be stated that on account of requirement of a good speaker, importance of narrative skills are increasing. Producing a well-structured and viable narrative is a complex process, and there is much to know about how this process occurs. This study may help to teachers and parents how to support children to produce lengthy, coherent, and cohesive stories. Those skills are also helpful to make sense of children's experiences as well as organizing and interpreting them.*

**Keywords:** *Narrative skills, story length, story grammar, evaluative devices*

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\*This study is a part of master theses. Part of this theses was represented both international and national conferences.

## ÇOCUKLARIN ANLATTIKLARI HİKAYELERİ ANALİZ ETMEK İÇİN BİR SİSTEM

### ÖZ

*Hikaye anlatma becerileri üç nedenden dolayı önemlidir. İlk olarak konuşma dilinin gelişmesi açısından yararlı bir araçtır (Standler & Ward, 2005). İkinci olarak hikaye anlatma becerileri çocukların akademik basarisi ve okuma yazma gelişimleri ile yakından ilgilidir (Fang, 2001). Son olarak, hikayeler bilişsel gelişimin bir parçası olarak kabul edilirler, çünkü hikaye anlatmak için hafıza, dil, mantıksal akıl yürütme gibi bilişsel becerilere gerek duyulmaktadır (Stein & Albro, 1997). Hikaye uzunluğu, hikaye yapısı, ve değerlendirme birimleri hikayelerin önde gelen boyutlarıdır. Bu yüzden, bu çalışma hikaye uzunluğu, hikaye yapısı (Labov,1972), ve değerlendirme birimleri (Peterson & McCabe, 1983 cited in Kang, 2003) üzerine yoğunlaşarak çocukların hikayelerini incelemek için bir sistem sunmaktadır. Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı tarafından hazırlanan Okulöncesi Eğitim Programı çocukların kendilerini özgürce ifade edebilmelerini, dinledikleri bir öyküyü tekrar anlatabilmelerini, resim, nesne, ya da olaylar arasında ilişki kurarak anlamlı öykü anlatabilmelerini vurgulamaktadır (MONE, 2012). Bu açıdan bakıldığında, iyi bir konuşmacı olabilmek için hikaye anlatma becerilerinin gelişmiş olması önem kazanmaktadır. İyi yapılandırılmış bir hikaye üretmek karmaşık bir süreçtir . çocukların anlattıkları hikayeleri analiz etmek için bir sistem geliştirmek bu süreci anlamamızda bize yardımcı olacaktır. Bu çalışma öğretmenlere ve ailelere çocukların nasıl detaylı, bütünlük ve tutarlı hikayeler anlatmalarını destekleyecekleri konusunda yardımcı olacaktır. Bu beceriler aynı zamanda çocuklara yaşantılarını nasıl anlamlandırabileceklerini , organize edip yorumlayacakları konusunda da yardımcı olacaktır.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Hikâye anlatma becerileri, hikâye uzunluğu, hikâye yapısı, değerlendirme birimleri*

### I. INTRODUCTION

The study of communicative competence has extended its scope to investigate more than internalizing grammar, vocabulary or other linguistic devices since language development has been evaluated with competence on longer discourse units such as narratives in recent years (Kang, 2004). Therefore, there has been a renovated interest in the study of narrative development over the past thirty years. This is due to the level of information it maintains concerning social, discursive and traditional condition of people's life (Bruner, 1991; Quasthoff, 1997). The use of narrative methodology results in unique and rich data that cannot be obtained from experiments, questionnaires or observations. Thus, use of narratives in research can be viewed as an addition to the existing inventory of the experiment and it has become a significant part of the repertoire of the social science (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998).

Success in modern industrialized society depends on having good verbal skills. Acquiring well-developed verbal skills are also necessary for school success (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1997). The world has been changing rapidly; hence, it requires a variety of new skills. In order to get along well in the new

world; children must be equipped with those skills (Bredenkamp & Copple, 1997). So, it can be stated that on account of requirement of a good speaker, importance of narrative development is increasing.

Narrative is one of the most vital skills that human beings have to make sense of their experiences as well as organizing and interpreting them. Narrative emerges as early as the second or third years of life in human development and it provides a good context to study children's language since this genre emerges early (McCabe & Peterson, 1991) and continues to develop throughout childhood (Hudson & Shapiro, 1991). These earliest narratives comprise simple references experienced from the immediate past such as "ball gone". When children enter school, they begin to tell lengthy, coherent, and cohesive stories (Mardell, 1991). Kang (1997) stated that the ability to tell a good story depends on a high level of language and cognitive skills. In this sense, investigating young children's narratives gains importance.

Narrative has been the subject of many divergent disciplines including religion, history, literature, ethnography, cognitive science, anthropology, sociology, psychoanalysis, psychology, linguistics, and theology (Quasthoff, 1997). Research on narratives ranges through hundreds of books and journals in all these disciplines. Although it is a hard prospect even to attempt a survey of research on narrative in social sciences, it is advisable for all disciplines to be familiar with research on narrative conducted other disciplines (McCabe, 1991).

Narratives have two basic functions: reference and evaluation. The referential function is about narrative's structure namely, whom the narrative is about, when, and where the action takes place. It is aimed as a well-formed structure on an initial orientation, a complication, and a resolution (Labov & Waletzky, 1967). Beginnings, middles, and ends of narratives have been analyzed in many accounts. However, there is a limited discussion about evaluation, which is one of the most important aspects of a narrative. Evaluation is an answer to the question why a narrative is told and what the narrator is getting at. Evaluative devices represent what is terrifying, dangerous, weird, wild, crazy, amusing, hilarious, wonderful, strange, uncommon, unusual, ordinary, plain, humdrum, run-of-the-mill. In other words, evaluation shows whether the narrative is worth reporting (Labov, 1972). The attitude is expressed by the narrator's thoughts and feelings toward the events through various linguistic strategies such as repetition, adjectives or reported speech (Kang, 2003).

With the two features provided above, the present study will follow the Labov's (1972) identification of components in well-developed narratives in order to investigate narrative structure and follow Peterson and McCabe's (1983) classification categories to investigate evaluative devices.

#### **A. Definition of Narrative**

Narrative is a basic method of rehearsing past experiences by synchronizing a verbal sequence of clauses to the sequence of events (Labov,

1997) and, clauses are ordered in temporal sequence. As such, Labov (1972) defines narrative as “a sequence of two restricted/independent clauses which are temporally ordered” (p. 360). As for this notion of narrative, an example is provided below:

- a I know a boy named Harry.
- b Another boy threw a bottle at him right on the head
- c and he had to get seven stitches

In this example, Labov (1972) accepts only (b) and (c) as narrative clauses since (a) has no temporal juncture and it might be located after (b) or after (c) without breaking temporal order. Stein and Glen (1979) provided similar definition, stating that story is a causally organized episode which proceeds sequentially. On the contrary, temporally ordered clauses are not enough for a text to be accepted as a narrative as narratives require more quality. For a text to be called as a narrative, it must be reportable; that is, it must be sufficiently unusual or exciting (Quasthoff, 1997).

There are some requisite skills to produce a good narrative. First of all, linguistically, children must have enough vocabulary knowledge for codifying information about the characters and the events in order to signify the sequence of events and their temporal relations. Cognitively, children must convey the motivation behind characters’ actions and they must establish reasonable relations between events and the theme of the story. Socially, children must use some evaluative devices to adjust the relationship with the audience and to sustain their attention (Reilly, Losh, Bellugi & Wulfeck, 2003).

How can we identify a good story? A substantial body of research suggests that coherence is the forefront indicator of a good story. Coherence refers to the structure of a story in which sequential events must be linked in a meaningful way (Hudson & Shapiro, 1991). Children are capable of telling basic patterns for familiar events and sequences even though they are not able to describe the sequence of events accurately until about age four (Owens, 2005). Similarly, Hudson and Shapiro (1991) found that preschool children were very capable of reporting their knowledge and experiences; however, they could not restructure them into a story format.

Narrative skills develop over the preschool and elementary school years in three ways. First, children’s narratives include progressively more story elements (Labov, 1972). Second, children’s narratives originate more adherent; that is, children become capable of using connectives such as “but”, “because”, and “although” to connect one theme to another in their narrative (Peterson & McCabe, 1991). Third, children comprehend incrementally more information concerning their evaluation of events or characters in the story (Meng, 1992, cited in Zevenbergen, 1996).

Bamberg (1997) accepted narrative development as a sub-constituent of language development. Furthermore, narrating is the central activity in a language to express experiences and constructions of experiences which are

always on the move (Bamberg, 1997; Van Deusen-Phillips et al, 2001). While telling stories, people live them since they reaffirm, modify, and create new ones in the process of telling them. Stories trigger the imagination, and through our imaginative participation in the created worlds, empathic forms of understanding are advanced (Bartlet, Daniel & Brauner, 1993, cited in Koch, 1998). The listener of the story will be able to travel worlds of well-organized stories' producers.

Narrative skills have recently become an important component of our lives due to the importance of narrative skills. Both clinicians and academicians are interested in its formation, function, and power (Mcadams, Josselson & Lieblich, 2001 cited in Champion, 2005). Narrative is popular among people due to its function in everyday life which enables, people to construct meaning by telling stories. Thus, narrative enables us to make sense of what is going on around us and to construct social reality (Berger and Luckmann, 1966, cited in Reissner, 2002). Narrative helps make the tacit things explicit and put thought, feelings and personal views into a real context. Talking about a problem or writing thoughts down might help find a solution since the situation has been changed by letting the thoughts out of one's mind, which is a reflexive process. In this context, it has to be emphasized that a story told a second time is a different story due to the reflexive character of narrative (Reissner, 2002).

Chang (2004) emphasized individual variation effects on children's narrative performance; for example, some children already have the ability to produce long, clear and detailed narratives, whereas other children could only produce short, fragmented stories with limited information. This probably results from the input which children received from their parents or primary caregivers.

Narratives function in a more vital role than these skills in people's life as competent narrative skills enable people to feel at ease in the world. Having a well-constructed narrative is an indicator of the ability to assimilate new experiences into a sense of self. Gaining the ability to produce a narrative teaches people how to organize and make sense of experiences (Baumeister & Newman, 1994). Moreover, people who have well-constructed narratives are likely to cope with confusion and disorientation in the face of new experiences. This ability provides children with the capability to create a coherent and flexible narrative grounds and capability to behave proactively in the world. If children are equipped with a well-constructed narrative, they will be able to think about and understand the past. Furthermore, they will develop skills in order to deal with the future (Champion, 2005). We continuously develop our own life story and we need narrative as a communication tool to share our experiences and ideas with other people. A person establishes firmer notion of self by being successful at organizing information and internalizing new experiences into an understanding of oneself (Champion, 2005).

Well-structured narrative means sophisticated narrative both on a microstructural and macrostructural level (Mardell, 1991). Microstructure refers to the constituent part of a narrative and the components children use to provide information on how they tell their stories. Children's strategy of using microstructural elements changes over time in preschool years and they master orientative information. As children mature, they use a complete version of the orientation elements such as who, what, where, and why in their stories and their sensitivity to their listeners' need for orientative information increases. As before, they indicate the beginning and the ending of their stories according to listeners' need. On the other hand, macrostructure refers to the general organization of a narrative. Macrostructural organization provides the framework to make stories meaningful for listeners. Characteristics of a coherent story and a definition of increased complexity in a story macrostructure have been controversial issue among linguists. However, there has been a consensus: As children grow older, they comprehend what is important in a story and their ability improves as to produce well-structured narratives (Mardel, 1991).

Ozcan (2004) defined factors shaping narrative development as brain internal factors, the play settings, where most of the peer interaction takes place, the institutionalized setting such as kindergartens and schools, and lastly, the cultural environment which shapes and is shaped by all previously mentioned external factors. Hicks (1991) investigated the narrative skills of children from low-income families and skills of children from middle-class families and found that children from low-income families are more likely to demonstrate less well developed narrative skills in the early elementary school years than children from middle-class families.

Care givers and teachers should know the developmental sequence of narrative and they should be aware of its importance. Knowledge of developmental sequence will guide while they plan language games to facilitate oral language and provide system for listening to children's stories.

### **B. Sample Stories in this Study**

The current study only reviewed related literature to figure out a way to investigate young children's narratives. In order to exemplify all these concepts and make framework concrete for readers, researcher use narratives from her own thesis. All sample narratives were told by first grade elementary students. To provide a comparable story-telling experience for all children, Mercer Mayer's (1969) picture book was used as a stimulus. The book is a wordless picture book which contains no words and consists of 26 separate panel scenes presented in an order and provides referential elements for the narrative, such as sequential and temporal order of events, the structural elements of setting, goal, complications and resolution episodes. The narrator is quite free to describe the events because each separate panel is rich in detail. The book leaves the narrator free to use their own linguistic evaluative devices

due to its structural features. Moreover, Kang (2003) claimed that the use of picture book was especially important because it allowed reliable comparison of the ways in which the participants performed the same task. Such instruments can also highlight the relationship between the narrative development and the other literacy skills such as reading.

The main protagonists of the story are a boy, a dog, and a frog. While the boy and the dog are sleeping, the frog escapes and story begins. The boy and the dog are searching everywhere to find the frog. However, they confront with several difficulties, but they keep on searching. Finally, the boy and the dog find the frog living with his family and return home with the frog.

At the beginning of the study, researcher introduced herself to the children and attended 2 or 3 lessons per classrooms to establish rapport with the children. Before narrating the story, each children was allowed to investigate the whole book “Frog where are you?” to create a positive and relaxing atmosphere between the child and the researcher. With the need to strengthen cooperation, the researcher introduced herself as a student and told the child that these stories were essential for her homework. Prior to the process, children were told that he/she had the right to stop if he/she did not want to continue; however, all of the participants completed the story. Children did not receive any probing questions during the story telling task. The researcher avoided directing the children’s narrative, but when children asked questions about pictures, the researcher answered them simply. Moreover, the researcher encouraged children to continue telling their narrative when they ceased, hesitated or had difficulties in telling the story by saying “please tell loudly” or “you can tell by looking at pictures”. All the narratives were recorded and then transcribed.

The following instruction was given to the child:

“I am here to listen to you. I will never get bored with your story. I can wait until you finish your story even if it is too long. It is your own story, so you can tell whatever you want. Now, would you please tell me about it by looking at the pictures?”

## **II. ANALYZING CHILDREN’S NARRATIVES**

### **A. Data Collection Material**

In order to investigate the development of story structure, a variety of different methods have been applied to elicit stories from children. The most prevalent one is simply to ask children to make up a story, so that young children generally will produce fragmented description of past events (McCabe & Peterson, 1991). Fictional stories, story retelling and story comprehension are also used to make children to tell stories. Another method for eliciting stories from children is to provide them with a sequence of pictures and ask them to tell the story as depicted in the pictures (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1997). Mercer Mayer’s (1969) wordless book, *Frog Where Are You?*, is quite popular all over the

world. Almost 150 different researchers studying 50 different languages referred this book in their studies (Berman & Slobin, 1994 cited in Hoff-Ginsberg, 1997); there is also a term “frog-story” in literature (Serratrice, 2006).

### **B. Coding**

The stories told by children should be transcribed verbatim before coding begins. In this study, coding refers to the process of dividing stories into clauses, determining story grammar components and determining types of evaluative devices in each story. Coding required intense work since the validity of the results strongly depended on the identification of the stated categories. In this phase of the study, it was aimed to provide insight into the children’s story length, use of evaluative devices, and the construction of a story. If the stories had been coded inappropriately, the categories would be scored incorrectly and findings would also be deceptive. The current study concentrated on story length, story grammar, and evaluative devices to investigate young children’s narratives. In this sense, inter-coder reliability should be applied to maintain the reliability of the following: (a) the total number of clauses in each narrative, (b) story grammar analysis, also (c) the total number of evaluative devices and their types.

After finishing coding procedure, both quantitative and qualitative techniques could be applied in data analysis; that is, both the frequency and the function of story elements are within the interest of investigating young children’s narratives. Combining quantitative and qualitative research methods enables any researcher to make use of the most valuable features of each because by using both quantitative and qualitative approaches, research can reach the breadth, depth and richness of human life (Schulze, 2003). As a result, the current study suggests investigating children’s narrative with different paradigms to develop a comprehensive understanding.

### **C. Story Length**

Stories told by children were separated into clauses and narrative length was measured by counting the number of clauses included in the stories. Because the present study suggested Labov’s (1972) story grammar, his definition of clause was also suggested to divide narrative into clauses. Labov (1972) defined clause as an expression combining at least one stated subject and a verb. This definition of clause is also applicable to Turkish. For example, the sentence “When the boy woke up, he could not see the frog in the jar” is divided as (Özcan, 2004 p.30):

When the boy woke up

He could not see the frog in the jar

As the next step, qualitative content analysis or quantitative analysis such as mean difference can be conducted depending on the selection of dependent and independent variables. The length of narratives is commonly used to measure the language development of young children although it is not always a sensitive indicator of the developmental changes in children’s narrative

abilities (Muilo, Gillam, Peña & Gulley-Faehnle, 2003). Following example illustrated that long stories is not always ensured well developed narrating skills. Mentioning about the existence of every component of the picture in a single clause without any connection and coherence is not an indicator of well-structured narrative. (see protocol 2.3.1).

(P-2.3.1)

- a. Köpek arıları ağızını açıyor  
The dog bees open his mouth
- b. Arıları ağızına koyuyor  
He puts bees in his mouth
- c. Sonra ağaç var  
Then there is a tree
- d. Çocuk bağılıyor  
The boy shouts
- e. Ordan tilki çıkıyor  
Fox appears from there
- f. Sonra kopek var  
Then there is a dog
- g. Arılar ağaca çıkmaya çalışıyor  
Bees try to climb the tree
- h. Ağaç ordayken tilki orda  
While there is a tree, there is a fox
- i. Ballar çıkmaya başlıyor  
Honey begins to come out
- j. Yere düşmüş  
(it) fell down on the floor
- k. Ağacın üzerine çocuk tırmanıyor  
The boy climbs on the tree
- l. Delikten bakıyor  
(he) looks through the hole
- m. Papağan var orda  
There is a parrot there
- n. Düşüğünü görünce arılar  
When the bees see them fall
- o. Çoğalmaya başlıyor  
(they) begin to accumulate

#### **D. Story Grammar**

Stories have a structure and knowing that structure is necessary to tell a coherent story. Story grammar is the sequence of elements included in a story and it has been used to refer to the structure all stories follow (Hoff-Ginsberg, 1997). Minimal requirements for a story in terms of structural elements are grouped under the six titles: 1) a story must include a beginning or a triggering event, 2) a simple reaction, 3) a goal, 4) an initiative to reach the goal, 5) an

outcome and 6) an ending (Mandler, 1984). Correspondingly, Hudson and Shapiro (1991) states that the essential components included in narratives are: 1) a formal beginning and orientation introducing setting and characters, 2) initial goal directed actions, 3) a problem preventing to reach intended goal, 4) the solution to the problem and 5) a formal ending.

Rumelhart (1975) maintains that stories have an internal structure as in simple sentences. Although no one can specify a general structure for stories, the idea of “well-formedness” can be examined in the same way as it is for sentences. Rumelhart (1975) further perceives narrative as a “connected discourse”, the exact opposite of “unrelated string of sentences”. The following example illustrates how higher level of organization occurs in stories.

1. Margie was holding tightly to the string of her beautiful new balloon. Suddenly, a gust of wind caught it. The wind carried it into a tree. The balloon hit a branch and burst. Margie cried and cried.
2. Margie cried and cried. The balloon hit a branch and burst. The wind carried it into a tree. Suddenly, a gust of wind caught it. Margie was holding tightly to the string of her beautiful new balloon.

He accepted (1) as a story though (2) does not possess characteristics of story. According to him, the first one is a form of sensible whole, whereas second one seems to be just a string of sentences. Rumelhart (1975) suggests global rules and attempts to describe the global structure of a story. His story grammar can be applied to wide range of simple stories in a reasonable way. The current study utilized one of the most widely used formal story grammar developed by Labov (1972).

After narrative is coded at the clause level based on Labov’s (1972) definition, all of the narratives can be analyzed considering the following narrative aspect.

*Narrative structure:* After separated into main and subordinate clauses, the stories can be exposed to a story grammar analysis using Labov’s (1972) story grammar models. Every utterance is considered if it met the criteria of the six story grammar elements described by Labov (1972) or not. Story grammar elements and their components would be represented both qualitatively and quantitatively.

Labov (1972) identified story grammar elements which are identified as characteristics of well-developed narrative by previous studies:

*Abstract:* Labov (1972) stated that summarizing the whole story with one or two clauses is common for narrators. When listener hears the abstract, he is able to recapitulate the point of the story. In actual fact, it gives information about what is to come for listeners. A speech act seeking permission to narrate can be taken by the occurrence of an abstract within an ongoing dialogue (Romaine, 1985 cited in McCabe & Peterson, 1991).

Example:

(An answer to one of the researcher’s questions)

I talked a man out of Old Doc Simon I talked him out of pulling the trigger.

*Orientation:* Orientation is essential to identify the time, place, persons or their activity or the situation (Labov, 1972). That is, it provides contextual embedding for the listener. In this part, the narrator wanders from the events of the narrative in order to describe character and motivation and inform the listeners about who the participants were, where and when the events occurred to describe character and motivation (McCabe & Peterson, 1991). Moreover, the narrator constructs the setting to introduce characters and some initial events which will take place before the acts begin (Özcan, 2004).

*Complicating action:* Complicating action is an indispensable component of a narrative. It is comprised of the chronologically described events which occurred prior to the highpoint of the narrative. As Labov (1972) maintained, minimal requirements of narrative incorporate at least two temporally ordered events, which are complicating actions and they must be included if any written or spoken presentation is to be defined as a narrative (McCabe & Peterson, 1991). In other words, a complicating action consists of series of some episodes conducted to solve the main problem.

*Evaluation:* Evaluation indicates the point of narrative, why it is told and what the narrator is getting at. In other words, clauses describe the narrator's point of view.

*Resolution:* Solution of the complicating action.

*Coda:* Free clauses to be found at the ends of narratives, which signals that the narrative is finished.

#### **D.A. Orientation**

Orientalive information substantially influences the whole story especially *CA* (complicating action) because the audience needs orientative information to construct a web of relations between the characters and maintains a coherent plot throughout the act of story telling (Özcan, 2004). It is necessary to specify the time, place, people and their activity or the situation at the outset of a narrative (Labov, 1972). In other words, orientation includes basic and simple questions such as 'where', 'when', 'who' which must be answered and the relation among the time, place, and persons, must be settled to make a story comprehensible for the audience. Without the relations between the characters, spatial information and time, the narrated text seems to be just a depiction of the scenes in the wordless picture book "*Frog Where Are You?*" This can be illustrated below

(P-2.4.1.1)

- a Şimdi çocuk var  
Now there is a boy
- b Kurbağa kopek... kopek kurbağaya bakıyor  
Frog dog...the dog is looking at the frog
- c Köpekte ona bakıyor

- and the dog is looking at him  
d Kurbağa çocuğa bakıyor  
the frog is looking at the boy  
(P-2.4.1.2)  
a Birgün Ali evde oturuyormuş  
One day Ali was sitting at home  
b Hayvanlarına bakıyormuş  
(He) was looking at his animals

In the protocol 2.4.1.1, the existence of the boy, dog, and the frog was stated but the relationship among the characters was not constructed since all of the characters were introduced individually. Also it does not provide information related to time and the location of characters. On the contrary, the protocol 2.4.1.2, fulfilled all the requirement of orientation section since narrator made the relationships between characters obvious by using genitive markers and built a relationship by attributing the possession of animals to the boy. Özcan (2004) summarized the significant functions of mentioning the relationship among the characters: First, relational information helps the audience construct a mental scheme of the particular story and this scheme helps them process the organization of the events relative to the characters efficiently. Second, mentioning the relationship between the characters indicates narrator's cognitive development and whether the narrator is proficient enough to detail the orientative information, which itself is the indicator of the narrator's ability to take the audience's perspective into consideration. Furthermore, in the protocol 2.4.1.2, the narrator informed the audience about time by saying bir gün 'one day' although it was an unknown day and the narrator explicitly mentioned the location where the story took place.

#### **D.B. Complicating Action (CA)**

The quality of a *CA* is determined by four important parts: First of all, there should be a problem and in this study the escape of the frog is the main problem (see the clause *a* in the protocol 2.4.2.1). Secondly, in order to solve this problem, the protagonists should be aware of the problem of integrating into it (see clause *d*). Thirdly, the protagonists should express their emotional changes toward the frog's disappearance (see clause *e*). Lastly, they should take action to find the lost frog. That is, they attempt to resolve the complicating action (see clause *g*). The protocol 2.4.2.1 includes all the parts.

(P-2.4.2.1)

- a. Kurbağa kavanoz... kendi yuvasından çıkmış  
Frog jar... (it) leaves his home
- b. Sonra çocuk uyanmış  
Then the boy wakes up
- c. Sabah kavanozun içine bakmış  
(he) looks in the jar in the morning
- d. Ve kurbağanın olmadığını görünce

- And when (he) cannot see the frog
- e. Şaşırmış  
(he) is surprised
  - f. Sonra kıyafetlerini giyinip  
Then (he) gets dressed
  - g. Köpeği ile birlikte kurbağasını aramaya çıkacaklarmış  
(he) is going to look for his frog with his dog
- (P-2.4.2.2)
- a. Sonra çocuk uyuyor  
Then the boy sleeps
  - b. Kurbağada kavanozdan çıkıyor  
The frog gets out of the jar
  - c. Çocuk yatağa yatmış köpekte üstünde  
The boy is lying on the bed and the dog is on him
  - d. Çocuk üstüne bakıyor  
The boy looks at his clothes
  - e. Köpekte ipe bağlanmış  
The dog is tied up
  - f. Birtane çocuk bağıyor  
One child shouts
  - g. Köpekte kavanozu kafasına geçirmiş  
And the dog puts his head into the jar
  - h. Çocuk pencereden bakıyor  
The boy looks out of the window
- (P-2.4.2.3)
- a. Çocuk şu kurbağalara bakıyor  
The boy is looking at those frogs
  - b. Köpekte kurbağalara bakıyor  
The dog is looking at the frogs, too
  - c. Çocuk birşey diyor  
Boy is saying something
  - d. Elinde kurbağa duruyor  
The frog is in (his) hand
  - e. Sonra köpekte kaçıyor  
Then the dog escapes
  - f. Kurbağa kurbağalar kurbağalara bağıyor çocuk  
To frog, the frogs... The boy is shouting to the frogs

(narrated by the same child who produced P-2.4.2.2)

In the protocol P-2.4.2.2, the clause b is not seen as a problem because the narrator expresses neither any internal reaction nor any awareness of the lost frog. Even though he mentions that the boy is looking out of the window and shouting in the clauses *d*, *f* and *h*, these clauses do not imply that the frog is being searched for. If the narrator had expressed that they found their own frog

rather than an ordinary one in the protocol P-2.4.2.3 and the protocol 2.4.2.2 would have become a *CA*. This situation is explained in the 2.4.2.4 and 2.4.2.5 clearly.

(P-2.4.2.4 was taken from *CA*)

- a. Sonra kurbağa evden kaçmış  
Then the frog runs away from home
- b. Sonra bu köpekte ko... o şeyin içine bakıyor  
Then this dog j... looks into that thing

(P-2.4.2.5 was taken from *Resolution*)

- a. Ordan iki tane kurbağa yavrusu çıkmış  
Two baby frogs came out of that place
- b. Sonra burda da birazcık daha birazcık daha kurbağa çıkmış  
Then here a little, bit more a little bit more frog came out
- c. Sonra bu aradan kurbağasını bulmuş  
Then (he) found his frog in this gap

(narrated by the same child who produced the protocol 2.6.2.4)

Similar to the protocol 2.4.2.2, the protocol 2.4.2.4 did not include any inner reaction and awareness of the disappearance of the frog. In spite of the lack of awareness and inner reaction, the protocol 2.4.2.4 was accepted as a *CA* since the participant stated in protocol 2.4.2.5 in clause c, that the boy found his own frog, not just any other frog which means that he was aware of the problem although he did not mention it clearly in the *CA* section. The statement regarding the possessiveness of the frog also implies that the boy went in search of his frog, which was lost at the beginning of the story.

#### **D.C. Resolution**

As it was explained above, *Resolution* and *CA* sections are highly related to each other since the core feature in *Resolution* section which is whether the problem emerged at *CA* has been resolved or not. *Resolution* includes two more features: Whether the protagonists could find the frog after a goal-oriented action and whether the protagonists could take the frog back home or not. The protagonists' reaction is illustrated in the protocol 2.4.3.1 (see the clause c).

(P-2.4.3.1)

- a. Sonra ağacın arkasına bakıyorlar  
Then (they) look behind the tree
- b. İşte kurbağayı buldular  
Here! (they) found the frog
- c. Ondan sonra çok sevinmişler (the protagonist's reaction)  
After that (they) were very happy

The following protocol indicates all the features that constitute a well-formed *Resolution* section.

(P-2.4.3.2)

- a. Ve yine aramaya başlamışlar  
And (they) look again
- b. Bir tane kütük bulmuşlar  
(they) found a log
- c. Köpek ses yaptığı için sahibi de ona seslenmiş “sus” diye  
Because the dog made sound, his owner said to him “hush”
- d. Sonra hemen diğer kütüklerin arkasına bakınca  
When (he) immediately looks behind the other logs
- e. Orda kurbağaları görmüş  
(he) saw frogs there
- f. Kurbağa da küçük kurbağa da anne ve babasının yanına gitmiş  
The frog, the little frog went to his mother and father
- g. Sonra çocuk kurbağayı almış  
Then the boy got the frog
- h. Ve eve götürmüş  
And took (the frog) home

In the clause *a*, the participant declared by saying “started to look again”, that the protagonists had been in search of the missing frog; thus, the statement of the boy’s seeing the frog is a result of a predetermined and dynamic search in the clause *e*. Moreover, the boy took the frog home because he believed that he found his own frog. On the contrary, the following protocol is not considered as a *Resolution* since it does not meet the criteria of resolution although it implies that the frog and the protagonists met each other.

(P-2.4.3.3)

- a. Köpeğine de “sus” demiş  
(he) said to his dog “hush”
- b. Ağacın üstünden atlamışlar  
(they) jumped on the tree
- c. Üstüne yatmışlar  
(they) Lied on it
- d. Sonracığıma üstüne oturmuşlar  
And then sat on it
- e. Bir değmişler  
Touched
- f. Bir sürü kurbağa görmüşler  
(they) saw a lot of frogs

The protocol 2.4.3.3 would have been considered as a *Resolution* part of the story if it had met one of the mentioned criteria above. In addition, as mentioned earlier, there is a strong relationship between *CA* and *Resolution* and in order to produce a goal oriented search to find the frog, the participant must comprehend frog’s escape from jar as a problem and the consciousness about this problem emerges in the mind of protagonists. However, the narrative in

which occurs in the protocol 2.4.3.3 does not contain *CA* because it does not make a connection between *Resolution* and *CA* as it was stated that the protagonists found the frog which escaped.

#### D.E. Coda

*Coda* simply means the signal to inform audience that the story is over. *Coda* emerges in three ways: *Overt coda*: The narrator explicitly states that the story is over such as “that is all”; *Coda implied through linguistic*: The narrator hints the end of story not explicitly, but just implicitly such as “boy waved to frogs”; *Coda implied through gestures*: The narrator declares end of the story by his look or his mimic, which is not within the scope of the study. The protocol 2.4.4.1 and protocol 2.4.4.2 exemplify *overt* and *implied Coda* through linguistic means.

(P-2.4.4.1)

- a. Sonra kurbağalardan birtanesini almışlar  
Then (they) took one of the frogs
- b. Sonra öbür kurbağalar da bakmış onlara  
Then the others looked at them
- c. Birtane kurbağa altta kalmış  
One of the frog remained at the bottom
- d. Bitti (overt Coda)  
it's over

(P-2.4.4.2)

- a. Sonra bu aradan kurbağasını bulmuş  
Then (he) found his frog in this gap
- b. Sonra giderken  
Then (they) went
- c. Kurbağalara bay bay etmişler (implied Coda)  
(they) waved good bye to the frogs

The protocol P-2.4.4.3 includes both *overt* (the clause d) and *implied Coda* (the clause c) in this situation an implied *Coda* is accepted as a transition indicating that the story is coming close to the end.

(P-2.4.4.3)

- a. Sonra çocuk kurbağayı almış  
Then the boy got the frog
- b. Ve eve götürmüş  
And took home
- c. Kurbağalara da el sallamış  
Waved to frogs
- d. Bu kadar  
That's all

### **E. Evaluative Devices in Narrative**

Narratives involve both information about the characters and events of the story. They also include evaluative aspect through reflecting the narrator's perspective and its significance to the story (Reilly et. al, 2003). Evaluative devices provide explanations of why events occurred, especially the actions of characters in the story since evaluations are references to the mental states of characters, such as what they are thinking or feeling (Eaton, Collis & Lewis, 1999). Evaluative devices are necessary in order to express how one character's actions may lead to a reaction from the other, and how these actions affect what the characters may know, think, say, or feel. Narrator must capture the actions and perspectives of characters as they interact with each other (O'Neill, 2004).

Evaluative devices inform the listeners about point of the narrative, narrator's purpose, feelings, social-cultural values and what the narrator is getting at (Labov, 1972). Evaluation directs the listener to adopt an attitude toward story events in accordance with the desires of the teller (Alexander, Harkins, & Michel, 1993). Evaluation reflects the narrator's emotional reaction to the events he is relating, and in general the speaker's attitude towards the narrated events (Labov and Waletzky, 1967). This evaluative information makes clear why the narrated event is interesting or significant. They also suspend or emphasize the story action leading the listener's attention to what the narrator thinks, which is important in the narrative for the listener to understand (Harkin, Koch, & Michel, 2001).

Nine subtypes of evaluative devices were classified by Peterson & McCabe (1983) and adapted by Kang (2003). Evaluation coding was designed to capture types of evaluative devices that occurred in the narratives. The children might reveal their feelings and attitudes toward the stories they told through the following evaluative devices:

- Expressions of emotions ("The boy is angry ")
- Mental state of the characters (i.e., expressions of cognitions or character intentions, such as "The child thought that . . . ", "They decided to . . .", etc.)
- Intensifiers ("He was very angry")
- Expressions of defeat of expectation/Negatives ("but there was no answer ")
- Repetitions ("He looked again and again ")
- Hedges ("He was kind of curious ")
- Direct and indirect reported speech ("Where are you, frog?", "He asked the ground hog if he saw the frog")
- Character delineation ("the little boy")
- Adverbs (" . . . searching frantically for his frog . . . ")

Nonverbal signals involving facial expression, intonation pattern, gesture and postural adjustment are one aspect of the evaluative devices; however, these kinds of evaluative devices are not under the scope of present study.

As stated earlier, producing a narrative requires complex linguistic and social-emotional knowledge and skills. Generally, a good narrative contains both information about characters and events and subjective information, such as the character's feelings towards the events, which makes the story more attractive to readers. Therefore, the analysis of narratives provides a rich context for exploring the nature of both linguistic and social-emotional abilities in children's language development (Reilly et al, 2003). Narrative element draws upon general event representation and knowledge of story structure, whereas the evaluative devices require the child to formulate an inference about specific events. Evaluation informs the audience about the actions of protagonists in the story why events occurred, and what happens through reference to feelings, thoughts, and intentions (Eaton, Collins, & Lewis, 1999). This can be explained in the protocol 2.7.1 below:

P-2.5.1

- a) köpekte kavanoza kafasını koymuş  
The dog put his head on jar
- b) onu koklamaya başlamış  
He started to smell it
- c) kokusundan bulmak için  
To find from its smell

(produced by the ECE)

In the protocol 2.5.1, the participant explained the intention of dog. Also, she made use of her previous knowledge about the dog in the narratives. In this sense, examining the inclusion of evaluation deserves importance.

#### **F. Discussion**

Some suggestions can be made to teachers, parents, schools, and Ministry of National Education based on the current study. This study aims to help teachers and researchers to learn which characteristics of story determine the well-formedness of stories. This study also emphasizes that the study of communicative competence has extended its scope to longer discourse units such as narratives. Through this kind of studies, narrative analysis may become widespread.

The first measure in this study to evaluate young children's narrative is that story length which is not always reliable measure of story productivity. Long stories are sometimes only depictions of each component in the picture with no relation among them. In other words, longer narratives are more likely to be a listing of discrete events rather than a structured narrative. This claim is consistent with many studies, and it reveals the fact that length of the narrative is not always an indicator of story productivity (Muiloz et al, 2003). Although children may be competent enough to produce long stories, there is a possibility that these long stories are qualitatively unusual or poorly organized (Diehl, Benetto & Young, 2006). In this sense, young children's narratives should be investigated in multiple ways.

The second measure for analyzing young children's narratives is that story grammar in this study. It is argued that story structure is universal (Kocabaş, 2002). Yet, the context, in which the story is narrated and the reason why the story is told, is highly related with the production of story components. Zevenbergen et al (2003) report that Head Start (the child-focused program, which aims to increase the school readiness of young children coming from low-income families), has a positive effect on narrative skills. This finding corresponds to the assertion of Chang (2004) in his longitudinal study. Chang (2004) claims that narrative skills can be promoted during early childhood education, which enable young children to succeed in a literacy task at school. Moreover, Aksu-Koç (2005) states that with increasing years of schooling, children show higher levels of performance and display major changes in the cognitive strategies used in narrative organization. When teachers are aware of features of well-qualified stories, they probably support young children's narrative in a better way. Furthermore, producing a narrative is not just a producing a text. It is also primarily about the social relationship among people and this social relationship includes the narrator and the audience (Bloome et al, 2003). Early Childhood Education Curriculum includes language and literacy activities. These activities should be integrated with the narrative activities to improve narrative development at early age. Moreover, it requires teachers to learn how to implement such kind of activities.

Finally, in line with the predictions based on previous research, listening to the story repeatedly may have an immediate effect on child's narrative skills, especially on the use of evaluative devices (Harkins et al, 2001; Alexander, et al, 1993). Evaluative devices determine the well-formedness of a story in many respects: First, narrators use evaluative devices to establish the main points of the story (Labov & Waletzky, 1967) and to sustain listener's interest and participation by enriching the story through dramatization techniques, which capture and maintain attention (Reilly et al. 2004). Second, narrators reflect on their interpretation of events through evaluative devices, even though those evaluations are not directly evident within the picture book (Bamberg & Reilly, 1996). The use of mental state categories is much more important than the others because the use of mental state requires causal explanations for the story character's mental state and it reflects more complex cognitive operation. In short, evaluative devices facilitate narrative production since children take the need of audiences into consideration and tailor their narrative production accordingly through evaluative devices.

Kang (1997) emphasized the essentiality of the development of successful narrative skills responsiveness between parent and child. This responsiveness can be established through interactive story book reading since interactive story book reading activities involve children by questioning, commenting and responding to children's initiations about the words and pictures in the books (Brewer, 2001; Allor & Mccathren, 2003). Moreover,

children who are often and early exposed to reading tend to develop sophisticated language structures and a sense of story structure (Morrow, 1987 as cited in Fiore, 2007). Teachers and parents would begin to work together to encourage child's reading experiences. As such, training program for parents should be planned since reading activities and literacy opportunities can be provided for all types of income and education levels. For instance, prompt questions significantly increase the evaluative performance of children (Eaton et al, 1999). In this way, children make sophisticated inferences upon the character's action in the story (Wellman & Bartsch, 1988).

This study limited its scope to the children who had no intellectual, speech, language, hearing or learning deficits. Considering the rich sources of data that narrative production provides, future research is necessary in this area to analyze disabled children's language skills. Gaining information about those children's narrative skills, it becomes easy to prepare an intervention program for them.

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