

## Influence of 100 Books For 100 Days eTwinning Project on Preschool Teachers' Book Selections

Merve Yağcı<sup>a</sup>, Fatma Avcı<sup>b</sup>, & Sümeyye Öcal Dörterler\*<sup>c</sup>

\* Corresponding author

E-mail: [sumeyye.dorterler@dpu.edu.tr](mailto:sumeyye.dorterler@dpu.edu.tr)

a. Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education, Ankara, Türkiye,

b. Republic of Türkiye Ministry of National Education, Eskişehir, Türkiye

c. Kütahya Dumlupınar University, Dumlupınar Vocational School, Child Development Program, Kütahya, Türkiye.

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### ABSTRACT

Reading and reading comprehension play a critical role in an individual's cultural and cognitive development. Establishing reading habits during early childhood lays a strong foundation for lifelong learning. The 100 Books for 100 Days eTwinning project aims to foster this habit by encouraging participating teachers to involve families in reading 100 high-quality children's books with their children. This study investigates the impact of the 100 Books for 100 Days eTwinning project on preschool teachers' selection of children's books. A quantitative research design was employed, using a one-group pretest–posttest experimental model. The study group comprised 150 preschool teachers working in public kindergartens under the Ministry of National Education across various provinces in Turkey during the 2022–2023 academic year. All participants were registered on the eTwinning platform and voluntarily took part in the project. Data were collected using the "Scale of Preschool Teachers' and Parents' Criteria for Children's Book Selection (3–6 Years)." To analyze the data, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test—a non-parametric statistical method—was applied to determine whether there was a significant difference between the participants' pretest and posttest scores. The findings indicate a statistically significant improvement in participants' scores following the intervention, favoring the posttest results.

### KEYWORDS

Children's books; eTwinning project; children's book selection criteria; preschool education.

## INTRODUCTION

Reading plays a vital role in the development of an individual's personality. Through reading, individuals can access the information they need and find answers to their questions, thereby fostering both cognitive and emotional growth. Although formal reading instruction typically begins in primary school, the foundational skills required for reading are established during early childhood. Early exposure to books is among the most effective strategies for cultivating reading habits at a young age (Dwyer & Neuman, 2008).

The literature emphasizes that children's books provide an "enriched language environment," supporting the development of mental, emotional, and linguistic skills from the preschool period onward. Moreover, such books nurture sensitivity toward nature, other people, living beings, and everyday events (Erbay & Öztürk Samur, 2010; Tanju, 2010). Reading quality children's books in the preschool years strengthens the parent-child bond and enhances children's ability to name and understand new concepts (Kiefer, 2004). Additionally, children frequently exposed to literature are more likely to develop complex language structures with greater ease (Chomsky, 1972).

Although the foundations of reading are established during early childhood, it is essential for individuals to maintain and advance this skill throughout their lives—to comprehend and learn from what they read. In 2022, 81 countries, including Turkey, participated in the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to evaluate the performance of 15-year-old students in science, mathematics, and reading. In the domain of reading, Turkey ranked 36th out of 81 participating countries.

According to the Ministry of National Education (MoNE, 2023), while the 2022 PISA results in mathematics and science were the highest scores Turkey has ever achieved, reading scores remained close to the long-term average. The OECD average for reading was 476 points, the global average was 435, and Turkey's average was 456—below the OECD average but above the global mean.

High student performance in reading, science, and mathematics is expected to positively impact national development, as it enhances the quality of individuals entering the workforce in the future. In this regard, the preschool period is a critical phase for building reading awareness and fostering long-term reading habits. Experiences with books during early childhood represent the initial step in shaping children's perceptions and attitudes toward reading in later years (Çakmak & Yılmaz, 2009).

During the preschool years, books read aloud by adults and explored visually by children promote both physical and emotional closeness between the child and the adult (e.g., parent, teacher), encouraging children to adopt reading behaviors as models (Parlakyıldız & Yıldızbaş, 2004; Yurtseven, 2011; Wise & Buffington, 2004). These shared reading experiences not only offer emotional satisfaction but also expose children to new linguistic and visual experiences.

Reading illustrated storybooks prepares children for real-life situations, enhances listening and early reading skills, and supports meaningful language development by helping children paraphrase, explain, and express ideas using varied vocabulary (Poyraz, 2000; Sever, 2003; Uzmen, 1993).

To realize these developmental benefits, it is crucial to foster a positive relationship between the child and books. This connection depends on the selection of books that are developmentally appropriate, aligned with the child's interests and needs (Bayraktar & Demiriz, 2017). Furthermore, for children's books to serve these functions effectively, attention must be paid to both their external (physical) and internal (content) features (Gönen, Uygun, Erdoğan, & Katrancı, 2012).

The quality of children's books can initially be evaluated based on their physical characteristics, including size, paper type, page layout, adherence to spelling and punctuation rules, as well as cover design, binding, and illustrations (Saçkesen, 2018). According to Ciravoglu (1999), the dimensions of children's books should be manageable for small hands and designed to sustain attention, as appropriately sized books are more likely to attract children's interest and foster a positive reading experience.

It is recommended that children's books be made of durable, non-glossy materials to prevent light reflections that could hinder readability (Oğuzkan, 2001), and that the binding be both sturdy and visually appealing (Saracho, 1989). Regarding page layout, elements such as picture placement, line spacing, paragraph indentation, and page margins (top and bottom) are essential for readability and visual balance.

Children's books should strictly follow grammatical conventions and punctuation rules (Gönen, 1986; Oğuzkan, 2001). The cover should be engaging, vibrant, and thematically aligned with the book's content (Saracho, 1989). While children's books may vary in the ratio of text to illustrations—from picture-only books to those with dense text and minimal visuals—they should never be devoid of images. Illustrations should be clear, interpretable, and possess artistic value (Gönen, 1979).

For preschool-aged children, illustrations are particularly influential; children often assess the appeal of a book based on its pictures and interpret visuals with a realistic perspective. Therefore, it is essential that illustrations are dynamic, aligned with the accompanying text, and presented on the same page for cohesive interpretation (Gönen, 1986). Secondly, the quality of children's books can be evaluated in terms of their contextual elements, including theme, subject matter, characters, plot structure, language, and style (Saçkesen, 2018). High-quality children's literature should enrich the child's lived experience, support personality and creativity development, reflect evolving societal values, promote appreciation for humanity, nature, and life, and portray individuals realistically (Ahat, 2023; Alpay & Anhegger, 1975; Körükçü, Kapıkıran, & Aral, 2016).

The central message of such books should be conveyed implicitly, allowing the child to grasp it intuitively rather than through overt moral instruction. Themes should be

developmentally appropriate, acknowledging that children's thinking progresses from concrete to abstract and from immediate surroundings to more distant contexts. Additionally, books should foster an understanding that the child is an integral member of society and cannot be detached from it. At the same time, they should affirm the child's identity and sense of belonging, avoiding narratives that create alienation from the self or the social environment (Alpay & Anhegger, 1975; Kiyaz & Gürlek, 2021; Woolley & Cox, 2007; Yükçü et al., 2019).

The structural quality of books introduced to children from the preschool years plays a foundational role in cultivating individuals who will develop a sustained reading culture in the future (Sever, 2008). Fostering a love for reading and establishing reading habits from an early age is of critical importance. Engaging children with books that align with their interests and natural curiosities can help them perceive reading as an enjoyable activity, thereby encouraging the development of positive attitudes toward reading.

However, not every book that captures a child's attention or provides entertainment necessarily contributes positively to their development (Güzelyurt, 2018). As noted by Neydim (2010), selecting appropriate books for the preschool period has simultaneously become easier and more challenging. Although a vast array of children's books is available through online platforms, not all of them meet the criteria of quality literature suitable for early childhood. In this context, preschool teachers hold a significant responsibility. Children's books serve as valuable tools for introducing a wide range of concepts and themes within early childhood education. Therefore, it is essential for preschool educators to be familiar with a variety of children's books and to select them in accordance with children's developmental needs and individual interests (Ulusoy & Altun, 2018).

Research by Ergün and Gündüz (2011) indicates that although pre-service preschool teachers receive theoretical instruction on children's literature, they often lack practical experience in identifying the essential features of quality books due to limited engagement with actual materials during their training. The project presented in this study seeks to address and help bridge this gap.

The project was implemented through the eTwinning platform, which provides teachers from all disciplines and educational levels with high-quality professional development opportunities by facilitating collaborative project work. Through this platform, educators can design and execute both national and international projects, enabling the implementation of innovative ideas in cooperation with peers (Avci, 2021).

*100 Books for 100 Days* is one such initiative conducted on the eTwinning platform. Launched in 2017, the project targets children aged 3 to 6 who are enrolled in preschool education. Its primary objectives include fostering reading habits at home, supporting families and educators in selecting high-quality children's literature, encouraging children to take responsibility for tracking their daily reading activities, enhancing imagination, and promoting self-expression skills. A review of the literature highlights that adults often lack sufficient

knowledge and experience in selecting quality books for children (Külcü, 2019; Ulutaş, 2017; Yazıcı et al., 2018).

The main objectives of the study to examine the influence of the 100 Books for 100 Days eTwinning Project on preschool teachers' criteria for selecting children's books and to evaluate the effectiveness of this intervention-based model in promoting the use of high-quality children's literature in early childhood education by teachers, thereby contributing evidence-based findings to the literature during the 2021–2022 academic year.

## METHOD

### Research Model

This study aimed to examine the impact of the 100 Books for 100 Days Project, implemented via the eTwinning platform, on the book selection practices of preschool teachers who participated in the project during the 2021–2022 academic year. This study employed a pre-experimental research design, specifically the one-group pretest–posttest design. Pre-experimental designs are characterized by the absence of a control group and random assignment, which limits control over internal validity; however, they are widely used in educational settings where naturally occurring groups and ethical considerations restrict the use of more rigorous experimental designs (Campbell & Stanley, 1963; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

### Project Design

During the development phase of the project, the researchers observed that both teachers and parents experienced difficulties in selecting high-quality children's books and that many families did not engage in regular book-reading activities at home. In response to these needs, the 100 Books for 100 Days (100 Güne 100 Kitap) eTwinning Project was designed as a national early childhood reading culture initiative operating through the eTwinning infrastructure supported by the Turkish National Support Service (NSS) under the General Directorate of Innovation and Educational Technologies. Since its launch in 2017, the project has targeted children aged 3 to 6 and has aimed to foster home-based reading habits, support teachers and families in selecting quality children's literature, encourage children to take responsibility for tracking and caring for weekly book bags, enhance imagination, and strengthen self-expression skills.

In line with these objectives, the researchers prepared a detailed project plan and opened the initiative to preschool teachers via the eTwinning portal for the 2021–2022 academic year. Participation was limited to 150 preschool teachers working in various provinces across Türkiye. Each classroom enrolled in the project included an average of 18 to 25 children, resulting in the involvement of approximately 2,700 to 3,000 children and about 150 schools. While the researchers coordinated project logistics—such as training sessions and data collection—the classroom implementation was carried out entirely by the participating teachers without researcher intervention.

At the beginning of the project, participating teachers received a series of professional development sessions delivered by experts in children's literature and early literacy. Topics

included criteria for selecting children's books, characteristics of high-quality children's literature, the educational versus literary functions of picture books, and the principles and practice of interactive book reading. An additional session on early literacy development was provided by an expert.

Following the training phase, the researchers and project participants collaboratively compiled an initial list of 256 high-quality children's books based on established selection criteria. This list was transformed into a Google Forms questionnaire, and feedback was obtained from five experts specializing in children's literature. The expert evaluations were analyzed and synthesized by the researcher, resulting in the 100 Books for 100 Days Project Book List, which included 193 qualified children's books authored by 100 writers.

To support systematic implementation, a specially designed book bag was introduced as part of the project's logistics. Each teacher procured enough books for the number of children in their classroom and selected 100 titles from the finalized list that aligned with their students' developmental levels. Teachers organized the selected books into numbered book bags and created a weekly distribution schedule. Every Friday, children took home a different book bag and returned it the following Thursday, ensuring that each book bag circulated through all students over the course of the year.

Throughout the implementation process, teachers sent 100 different high-quality books to children's homes, monitored families' daily reading logs, managed family involvement activities, and recorded quantitative data. All activities, materials, and documentation were systematically recorded in the eTwinning TwinSpace environment and regularly reported. The project was implemented from September 2021 to June 2022 and contributed to the ongoing national effort to promote high-quality children's literature and strengthen early reading culture in Türkiye.

### **Study Group**

The study group consisted of 150 preschool teachers employed in public preschools affiliated with the Ministry of National Education across various provinces in Türkiye during the 2021–2022 academic year. All participants were registered on the eTwinning platform and voluntarily took part in the 100 Books for 100 Days Project.

Participants were selected through purposeful sampling. The project announcement was shared via the eTwinning portal, and preschool teachers who voluntarily applied during the 2021–2022 academic year constituted the sample. All applicants who met the basic eligibility criteria—being an actively employed preschool teacher, having an appropriate classroom structure, and being able to sustain the project throughout the academic year—were accepted into the project. All 150 teachers who were accepted into the project also agreed to participate in the research component. No contacted teacher declined participation, and all remained active throughout the entire implementation process.

Communication with participants was conducted exclusively through TwinMail, the official communication tool of the eTwinning platform. All study-related materials, including

survey links, information letters, and voluntary participation consent forms, were distributed via TwinMail.

Thus, all participants took part in both the project and the research on a fully voluntary basis.

**Table 1.**

*Demographic Characteristics of Participants*

Variable		n	%
School of Graduation	Preschool Teacher (4-Year)	138	94
	Master's Degree, Doctorate	11	7,3
Number of Years of Employment	1-5 years	3	2,0
	6-10 years	31	20,7
Age groups	11-15 years	73	48,7
	16-20 years	31	20,7
Whether Children's Literature Course is Taken	20+ years	12	8,0
	Yes	129	86,0
Frequency of Taking Books to School	No	21	14,0
	Once a Week	4	2,7
Frequency of Changes in the Library	Every Fifteen Days	8	5,3
	Once a Month	38	25,3
Who is the Decision Maker when Buying Books in the Library	Period One	67	44,7
	Once a Year	33	22,0
Frequency of Taking Books to School	Every day	6	4,0
	Once a Week	26	17,3
Frequency of Changes in the Library	Every Fifteen Days	26	17,3
	Once a Month	52	34,7
Who is the Decision Maker when Buying Books in the Library	Period One	26	17,3
	Once a Year	12	8,0
Who is the Decision Maker when Buying Books in the Library	Other	2	1,3
	Teacher	64	42,7
Who is the Decision Maker when Buying Books in the Library	Teacher and Children	44	29,4
	Teacher and School Principal	29	19,4
Who is the Decision Maker when Buying Books in the Library	Parents and Teacher	13	8,7

According to Table 1, the vast majority of participants (97.2%) held a four-year bachelor's degree in preschool education. In contrast, 1.3% had graduated from a distance education program (master teacher), and 7.3% held a postgraduate degree (master's or doctorate). Regarding professional experience, 2.0% of the participants had been working for 1–5 years, 20.7% for 6–10 years, 48.7% for 11–15 years, 20.7% for 16–20 years, and 8.0% had more than 20 years of teaching experience.

In terms of the age groups of children in their classrooms, 2.0% of the teachers were working with 3-year-olds, 10.7% with 4-year-olds, 60.5% with 5-year-olds, and 26.7% with 6-year-olds. A substantial majority (86%) of participants reported having taken a course in children's literature during their pre-service education, while 14% had not received such training.

With respect to the frequency of acquiring books for classroom use, most teachers reported purchasing books once per semester. Similarly, classroom libraries were most often updated on a monthly basis. The findings also revealed that the teacher was typically the primary decision-maker in the selection of books for the classroom library.

**Data Collection Tools:** The data collection tools used in the research process are detailed below.

**Personal Information Form:** A *Personal Information Form* was developed to gather demographic information from the participants. This form included questions related to participants' educational qualifications, years of professional experience, the age groups of children they teach, whether they had previously taken a course on children's literature, the frequency with which they purchase books for classroom use, the frequency of updating classroom libraries, and who holds decision-making authority regarding the selection of books for the classroom library.

**Preschool Teachers' and Parents' Criteria for Children's Book Selection Scale (Ages 3–6):** This scale was developed by Serpil Taşkesen in 2008 to assess the criteria used by preschool teachers and parents when selecting books for children aged 3 to 6. The scale comprises three sub-dimensions: *Physical Characteristics of the Book*, *Content (Subject and Theme)*, and *Content (Language and Character)*. Initially, the scale included 58 items; following exploratory factor analysis, this number was reduced to 21.

To ensure content validity, the scale was reviewed and revised based on the feedback of five field experts (2 Professors, 1 Associate Professor, and 2 Field Specialists), after which it was piloted. Data were collected from 871 parent forms and 97 teacher forms (Taşkesen, 2008). The scale instrument consisted of two sections: the teacher form included 7 demographic items, while the parent form included 6. Both forms contained the same 21 items that constituted the core of the scale, rated on a 5-point Likert scale.

To determine the suitability of the dataset for factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were applied. According to Büyüköztürk (2002), a KMO value of .60 or higher and a statistically significant Bartlett's test indicate appropriateness for factor analysis. In this study, the KMO value was found to be .72, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity yielded a statistically significant result ( $p < .01$ ), confirming that the data were suitable for exploratory factor analysis. To assess the reliability of the scale, Cronbach's alpha coefficients were calculated. The results indicated that the Cronbach's alpha value for the first factor was .67, for the second factor was .64, and for the third factor was .66. The overall Cronbach's alpha value for the entire scale was .67. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the scale demonstrates an acceptable level of internal consistency. The total score obtainable from the

*Preschool Teachers' and Parents' Criteria for Children's Book Selection Scale (Ages 3–6)* ranges from a minimum of 21 to a maximum of 105.

### **Application of the Scale**

At the beginning and end of the project, the scale was distributed to the 150 preschool teachers participating in the *100 Books for 100 Days* eTwinning Project. The scale was shared via TwinMail on the eTwinning portal and administered through a Google Forms link. Data collection was completed through responses received from participants at both time points.

### **Data Analysis**

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was used to assess the normality of the pretest and posttest data distributions. Since the data did not meet the assumptions of normality, the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, a nonparametric statistical method, was employed to analyze differences between pretest and posttest scores.

## **FINDINGS**

Findings of the study listed below.

**Table 2.**

*Normality Test Results of Participants' Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores*

Test	N	Mean (M)	SD	Min	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis	K-S D	p-value
Pre-Test	150	3.89	0.28	3.10	4.62	0.074	0.099	0.097	.002
Post-Test	150	4.01	0.34	3.29	5.00	0.60	0.014	0.063	.040

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to test the distribution of the data and according to the test results, the scores obtained by the participants for the pre-test and post-test values did not show a normal distribution ( $p<0.05$ ). For this reason, non-parametric methods were used to analyze the data of this study. Wilcoxon test was applied to the data of this study

**Table 3.**

*Wilcoxon Test Results of Participants' Pre-Test and Post-Test Scores*

	N	Sd	Z	P
Pre-Test	150	3,89	0,28	-2,970
Post-Test	150	4,01	0,34	0,003

According to the result of the Wilcoxon test conducted to determine whether the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the participants differed, it was found that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test mean scores of the participants ( $p<0.05$ ). Accordingly, there was a statistically significant difference in favor of the post-test on the book selection criteria of preschool teachers of the *100 Books for 100 Days* eTwinning Project applied to teachers.

## DISCUSSION

A quality children's picture book is defined as a collaborative product created through the joint efforts of the author, illustrator, designer, and publisher (Sever, 2003). Several key criteria contribute to the qualification of children's books, including factors such as page count, the quality and appropriateness of illustrations, and the educational value of the content (Yazıcı, Yıldız, & Durmuşoğlu, 2018). Contemporary preschool books are specifically designed for children aged 0–6 years, with their developmental characteristics forming the foundation of the design and content (Morrow, 2007; Sawyer, 2009; Varışoğlu & Tuzcuoğlu Aksin, 2019).

The literature highlights that the primary goals of incorporating high-quality children's books into the preschool education process are to foster early familiarity with books, cultivate reading habits, and nurture a lifelong love for reading (Ateş, Çetinkaya, & Yıldırım, 2012; Batur & Alevli, 2014; Gürcan, 1999; Külcü, 2019).

The present study, titled *Investigating the Effect of the '100 Books for 100 Days' eTwinning Project on Preschool Teachers' Children's Book Choices*, contributes significantly to understanding preschool teachers' approaches to children's literature and the criteria they consider when selecting books. The findings demonstrate that participation in the project positively influenced teachers' book selection practices, leading to an improvement in their awareness and knowledge regarding the selection of quality children's books.

The project thus has the potential to enhance the quality and educational value of classroom libraries by guiding teachers toward more informed and deliberate book choices, ultimately enriching children's early literacy experiences.

A review of the relevant literature highlights the numerous benefits of reading quality children's books to young children during early childhood. Reading is widely recognized as a critical factor influencing cognitive and emotional development, as well as serving as a fundamental tool in the learning process. It contributes significantly to shaping personality, fostering idea formation, and facilitating attitudinal change (Palani, 2012).

For instance, a study by Robbins and Ehri (1994) demonstrated that reading storybooks to preschool children twice daily over a period of 2–4 days enabled them to learn 22 previously unfamiliar words, underscoring the role of reading in vocabulary acquisition. One of the primary purposes of children's literature is to support language development (Gönen, 2013). However, the effectiveness of reading activities is highly dependent on the quality and suitability of the selected books.

Particular emphasis should be placed on ensuring access to children's books that genuinely support language development. Materials that fail to consider children's attention span and developmental readiness may discourage reading interest and potentially hinder linguistic growth (Temizyürek, 2003). This concern is especially relevant in the current publishing landscape, where commercial priorities may at times overshadow educational and literary quality (Sever et al., 2016). Therefore, the careful selection of age-appropriate and

pedagogically sound books is essential in fostering a positive and lasting relationship between young children and reading.

Another study (Zucker et al., 2013) examined the effect of picture storybook reading activities conducted in classroom settings on children's language development. The findings revealed that teachers who implemented interactive reading strategies had a positive influence on children's overall language acquisition and vocabulary growth.

Similarly, Yurtseven (2011) investigated the relationship between the frequency with which mothers read to their children, the children's preschool education status, and the mothers' competence in selecting children's books, and how these factors influenced children's social skills. The study sample included four preschool teachers, their students, and the students' parents in Kilis, Turkey. The results demonstrated that children's social skills were positively associated with the frequency of maternal reading, the mothers' expertise in book selection, and whether the child had received preschool education.

In line with these findings, Neuman and Wright (2007) emphasized that the level of parental awareness and attentiveness in selecting books plays a crucial role in making developmentally appropriate and effective choices for children.

The literature includes several studies that align with the present research in various respects. For instance, in a master's thesis conducted by Saçkesen (2008), which examined the book selection practices of parents and preschool teachers, it was found that teachers' criteria for selecting children's books were influenced by multiple variables. While the selection criteria did not significantly differ based on the type of school from which the teachers graduated, significant differences were observed in the *content (language and character)* sub-dimension. Additionally, teachers' book selection criteria were found to vary according to age and years of professional experience. Notably, differences in the *physical characteristics* sub-dimension of book selection were associated with whether the teacher had taken a course in children's literature.

These findings are consistent with the results of the current study. The teachers who participated in the *100 Books for 100 Days* eTwinning Project received targeted training on children's literature as part of the project. As a result of these professional development sessions, participating teachers reported increased knowledge about children's literature and demonstrated greater care and discernment in selecting appropriate books for preschool children.

Another study aimed at identifying the criteria preschool teachers consider when selecting children's books was conducted by Külcü (2019). The results of this study indicated that teachers' scores on the children's book selection criteria scale did not significantly differ by gender, postgraduate education status, need for training on book selection, or years of professional experience. However, significant differences were observed based on variables such as the level of training received in children's literature, self-perceived competence in

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selecting age-appropriate books, age, the university and department from which participants graduated, and the age group of children they were teaching.

Similarly, in a study by Yükselen, Yumuş, and Işık (2016), the views of preschool teachers regarding criteria for selecting children's books were explored. The criteria identified by teachers were categorized into physical and content features of illustrated books, developmental appropriateness, and book types. The study involved 80 preschool teachers from 15 public and private early childhood education institutions. One of the key findings was that, while teachers were knowledgeable about the physical features of books, they paid relatively little attention to the author or publishing house. Additionally, the study found that teachers' level of education significantly influenced their book selection practices.

The findings from both studies are consistent with the results of the current research, further reinforcing the conclusion that professional training and educational background play a critical role in shaping preschool teachers' competencies and preferences in children's book selection.

Bartan (2018) gathered the opinions of 26 preschool teachers in Kütahya to identify the criteria they consider when selecting children's books. The study concluded that teachers primarily focus on the physical characteristics of the book, the clarity of the language, and the simplicity of the content when choosing books for classroom use. It was also noted that teachers tended to prefer books published by well-known authors and reputable publishers.

Similarly, Daniels et al. (2022) reported that parents often consider the physical aesthetics of the book, the difficulty of the text, physical durability, and the educational value of the content when selecting books for their children. In another study by Bergman et al. (2019), semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore parents' perspectives on what constitutes a good children's book, their preferences, and the reasons behind those preferences.

Karayel (2019) examined preschool teachers' competencies in selecting storybooks and found that teachers were capable of making developmentally appropriate choices, taking into account factors such as the book's support for various developmental domains, its subject, theme, language and expression, embedded messages, and educational value. In addition, physical features were found to be a secondary consideration. However, teachers expressed difficulty in evaluating book covers, noting that many were too thin or fragile, making it challenging to assess their quality based on the desired criteria.

Furthermore, the reading cultures of preschool teachers and parents of children aged 3 to 6 were examined alongside their evaluation of book selection criteria for preschool-aged children. The findings revealed a positive correlation between the total scores related to individual development, basic reading skills, personal book preferences, and overall reading culture of both groups and their total scores on the criteria for selecting children's books (Teke, Baş, & Çubuk, 2024).

Understanding which criteria should be prioritized in children's book selection is essential for minimizing common errors, raising awareness among educators and parents, and improving both the formal and contextual quality of the books selected for young children (Yazıcı, 2023).

## CONCLUSION

The quality of children's picturebooks plays a critical role in shaping early literacy experiences, supporting language development, and fostering positive reading habits during the formative years of early childhood. High-quality picturebooks—produced through the collaborative efforts of authors, illustrators, designers, and publishers—must be developmentally appropriate, visually meaningful, linguistically rich, and pedagogically sound (Sawyer, 2009; Sever, 2003; Morrow, 2007; Yazıcı, Yıldız, & Durmuşoğlu, 2018). The literature consistently emphasizes that access to such books cultivates early familiarity with reading, nurtures intrinsic motivation, and contributes to long-term cognitive, linguistic, and social development (Ateş, Çetinkaya, & Yıldırım, 2012; Batur & Alevli, 2014; Gürcan, 1999; Külcü, 2019).

The present study—*Investigating the Effect of the “100 Books for 100 Days” eTwinning Project on Preschool Teachers’ Children’s Book Choices*—adds to this body of research by examining how structured, collaborative, and training-oriented interventions influence preschool teachers' book selection practices. The findings reveal that participation in the project significantly enhanced teachers' awareness, knowledge, and discernment regarding the features of high-quality children's books. Teachers who engaged in the project demonstrated a more deliberate and informed approach to evaluating both the physical and content-related characteristics of books, reflecting the impact of the targeted professional development sessions integrated into the project.

These results align with prior research showing that teachers' book selection criteria are shaped by factors such as training in children's literature, professional experience, educational background, and self-perceived competence (Külcü, 2019; Saçkesen, 2008; Yükselen, Yumuş, & İşık, 2016). Similar to the findings of Zucker et al. (2013), the present study also underscores the importance of interactive reading practices supported by appropriate book choices. By strengthening teachers' competencies, the project contributes to improving the quality and educational value of classroom libraries, thereby enriching children's early literacy environments.

The broader literature further suggests that children's exposure to high-quality picturebooks supports vocabulary acquisition, social development, and overall language growth (Robbins & Ehri, 1994; Yurtseven, 2011). The outcomes of this study reinforce the argument that both educators and families must be equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to select developmentally suitable, engaging, and educationally meaningful books for young children. This is especially crucial in a publishing landscape where commercial factors may at times overshadow literary and pedagogical quality (Sever et al., 2016).

In conclusion, the *100 Books for 100 Days* eTwinning Project demonstrates strong potential as an effective, evidence-based model for supporting teachers in making informed book choices and fostering rich early literacy experiences in preschool settings and at homes. By guiding teachers toward high-quality children's literature and strengthening their evaluative competencies, the project contributes not only to the improvement of classroom book collections but also to the broader goals of promoting reading culture, supporting language development, and enhancing children's cognitive and socio-emotional growth via interactions with caregivers.

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