REVIEW ARTICLE

The Integration of European Classics into Primary Turkish Education: Reader-Response Theory and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT
This systematic review addresses the pedagogical challenges of integrating European classics into Turkish primary education, specifically within the context of the Ministry of National Education's "100 Fundamental Works" list. Despite policy mandates, a significant gap exists between the "universal" philosophical intent of these texts and the practical reality of student alienation due to linguistic barriers and cultural disconnects. Utilizing the DISCAR model for qualitative document analysis, this study examines the issue through the lenses of Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy. Findings indicate that the prevailing instrumental approach prioritizes "efferent" reading, which hinders engagement. The study argues that shifting to an "aesthetic" stance—facilitated by strategies such as reading aloud and establishing intertextual connections—can transform European classics from sources of cultural alienation into instruments for critical intercultural dialogue. A "Culturally Responsive Reader-Response Model" is proposed to reconcile classical literary education with contemporary pedagogical needs..

Introduction

The Place of Literature in Education and the Role of Classical Works

In the field of educational philosophy, the place of classical works in the curriculum has long been at the center of an enduring debate. One of the philosophical foundations of this debate is "Perennialism," a movement with roots tracing back to Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. Perennialism argues that education should transmit universal truths and immutable principles; it posits that the locus where these truths exist in their purest form is within "classical works." According to this philosophical approach, a classical education enriched with Socratic methods is the primary vehicle for the intellectual and moral development of students.

This philosophical foundation also determines the pedagogical benefits of the classics. Among the gains offered to students by classical literature are the transmission of universal "moral messages" distilled from human history, the enrichment of "vocabulary" in both quality and quantity, the acquisition of "historical and cultural knowledge" through texts, and perhaps most importantly, the "challenge to critical thinking skills." Research indicates a positive and significant relationship between reading habits and critical thinking dispositions, particularly at the primary school level.

However, the role of classics in education creates a tension between text-centered philosophies, such as Perennialism, and student-centered philosophies, such as "Progressivism." Progressivism centers on the student's individual experience, problem-solving skills, and democratic values. This article argues that the fundamental challenge in teaching European classics in modern primary classrooms stems from this philosophical tension

between the approach emphasizing the universal authority of the text (Perennialism) and the pedagogical necessity of centering the student's individual experience (Progressivism).

The Global Debate: Pedagogical Objections to Classical Works

Despite the assertions of Perennialist philosophy and the potential benefits of the classics, modern pedagogy presents serious and valid objections to the use of these texts, especially at the primary school level. These objections concentrate primarily on two axes: *accessibility* and *relevance*.

First, these texts are perceived as linguistically and stylistically "difficult to read." The language used in classics can often make "no sense to modern readers," and the texts' "archaic" styles transform the act of reading from a pleasure into an arduous cognitive load. Second, beyond linguistic difficulty, there is the issue that the content of these texts appears "irrelevant" to contemporary students. Characters grappling with issues set in the early 1900s, or problems that modern readers do not understand, lead to an inability among students to "relate to the text," resulting in a strong sense of "disconnect."

This irrelevance and difficulty lead directly to a negative pedagogical outcome. Instead of establishing an *aesthetic* connection with the text and engaging in a critical dialogue with it, students resort to "shortcuts" to complete assignments and receive grades. The use of summary tools written in a "modern format," such as SparkNotes, is the most concrete indicator of this situation. Ironically, this action undermines the classics' aim of "developing critical thinking" and reduces reading to a superficial act of information acquisition that misses the "essence" of the text.

The Context of Turkey: Historical Process and Current Policies

The place of European classics in the Turkish education system must be evaluated in a context parallel to these global debates but possessing unique historical and cultural dynamics. The *sıbyan mektepleri* (Ottoman primary schools), which formed the basis of education in the Ottoman Empire, were founded primarily on the memorization of the Quran and the teaching of basic religious knowledge. The use of literary texts had a moral framework rather than constituting literary education in the modern sense.

The concept of children's literature and Western classics in the modern sense began with the "Tanzimat Era" in the second half of the 19th century. The "Westernization" movements of this period encouraged the translation of literary texts and their use as a tool for the modernization of education. Translations of La Fontaine's fables are iconic of this period. With the "Proclamation of the Republic" in 1923, this instrumental role was reinforced. In the early Republican era, children's literature was designed to prepare children for "citizenship and social life" in accordance with the "ideology of the period." During this process, translations of world children's classics such as *Maya the Bee*, *Heidi*, and *Nobody's Boy* (Sans Famille) became widespread and part of the educational curriculum.

This historical trajectory indicates that literary education (especially that of "classics") in Turkey has generally been used for an *instrumental* purpose (ideological, moral, or modernizing) rather than for an *aesthetic* experience. The most current and concrete example of this instrumental approach is the "100 Fundamental Works" list published by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) (Oku Okut Derneği, 2025). This list demonstrates a clear policy will to include numerous European classics in the curriculum for the primary education level, such as *Oliver Twist* (Charles Dickens), *Alice in Wonderland* (Lewis Carroll), *Gulliver's Travels* (Jonathan Swift), *Treasure Island* (Robert Louis Stevenson), *Pinocchio* (Carlo Collodi), *Heidi* (Johanna Spyri), and *What Men Live By* (Leo Tolstoy) (Oku Okut Derneği, 2025), alongside works of Turkish literature (e.g., Nasreddin Hodja Tales).

Research Problem, Purpose, and Theoretical Framework

The research problem of this study is the deep gap existing between the *policy* set forth by the MEB 100 Fundamental Works list (that European classics should be read) and the pedagogical *practice* regarding these texts. The globally debated problems of accessibility and irrelevance become even more complex in the context of Turkey's unique "cultural contradictions between East and West," which have been ongoing since the 1970s. The fact that these texts reflect "white, Euro-centric, heteronormative values" and create a risk of "cultural alienation" necessitates questioning the pedagogical ground of this policy.

This study proposes that this pedagogical gap and the risk of cultural alienation can be overcome by synthesizing two fundamental theories:

1. Reader-Response Theory (Karolides, 1992; Tompkins, 1994): Specifically, Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) "Transactional Theory." This theory argues that meaning is not statically hidden in the text but is dynamically created in the *transaction* between the reader and the text (Rosenblatt, 1978). Rosenblatt divides reading into two categories: "Efferent" (informational) and "Aesthetic" (Rosenblatt, 1978); this distinction provides a critical tool for identifying the fundamental methodological error in the teaching of classics.

2. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: This approach emphasizes that education must "value" students' "cultural identities" (Nayir, 2020) and that the curriculum must ensure students see their "own heritage" within the texts. This approach is strengthened by the determination that "intercultural" models (Nayir, 2020), which focus on *interaction*, *communication*, and *openness* (Nayir, 2020), are more suitable for Turkey's social structure than "multicultural" models.

In light of this theoretical framework, the purpose of this article is to present a systematic review analyzing the current pedagogical challenges and opportunities regarding the use of European classics in primary Turkish education (in the context of the MEB 100 Fundamental Works list) through the lenses of Reader-Response Theory (Rosenblatt, 1978) and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Nayir, 2020).

Methodology

Research Design

This study employs a Systematic Review (Martin, 2023) research design to comprehensively analyze, synthesize, and interpret existing national and international literature in the field of educational sciences. Systematic reviews, unlike traditional literature reviews, are a methodological approach involving a rigorous process of "identifying, selecting, critically appraising, and integrating findings from multiple sources" (Martin, 2023) to answer a specific and focused research question.

In the analysis phase of the review, the Qualitative Document Analysis technique (Sak et al., 2021) was utilized. Document analysis is defined as a "systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material" (Bowen, 2009). In this study, academic articles, book chapters, policy documents, and educational reports were treated as "documents."

Rationale for the Method

This dual-layered (Systematic Review + Document Analysis) methodological approach was deemed particularly suitable for the multidimensional nature of the research problem. The systematic review design was chosen to "ensure that educational interventions are based on sound evidence," "combine evidence to shape practice and policy," and "identify research gaps" (Martin, 2023). This is necessary specifically to analyze the gap between an existing *policy*, such as MEB's 100 Fundamental Works, and *practices* in the field.

Qualitative document analysis was used to "elicit meaning, gain understanding, and develop empirical knowledge" (Bowen, 2009) from the documents selected for this systematic review, which constitute the primary "data set" of this study. This method allows for the analysis not only of manifest content but also of the context, purpose, and cultural background of the documents.

Data Collection and Analysis Process (DISCAR Model)

The planning, execution, and reporting of this systematic review were structured based on the **DISCAR** model developed by Florence Martin (2023) for educational research. The DISCAR model (Designing, Including/Excluding, Screening, Coding, Analyzing/Synthesizing, Reporting) was used to ensure transparency and rigor at every stage of the process:

- D - Designing: Research questions (the problem stated in the Introduction), the theoretical framework (Rosenblatt and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy), and the review protocol were designed at this stage (Martin, 2023).

- I/E - Including/Excluding: The *corpus* (data set) of this study consists of articles published in peer-reviewed journals, books, theses, and reliable educational reports related to keywords such as "primary school Turkish education," "classic literature pedagogy," "cultural alienation Turkey," "Reader-Response Theory," "MEB 100 Fundamental Works," and "Culturally Responsive Education" (See Bowen, 2009; Martin, 2023;

Nayir, 2020; Oku Okut Derneği, 2025; Rosenblatt, 1978).

- S - Screening: Included documents were screened for full relevance to the research focus (Primary school, Turkish education, European classics, pedagogical methods) (Martin, 2023).

- C - Coding: Coding, the first stage of data analysis, was conducted according to the principles of qualitative content analysis (Berelson, 1952; Holsti, 1968). Texts were divided into "manageable code categories" to "systematically determine the presence of certain words, themes, or concepts" (Holsti, 1968). This process involved categorizing data with a "standardized coding system."

- A - Analyzing/Synthesizing: This is the core stage forming the "Findings" section of the study. After Coding was completed, the process of "Theming" (grouping related codes to form overarching themes) was conducted. This process followed Bowen's (2009) steps of "finding, selecting, appraising (making sense of), and synthesizing data."

- R - Reporting: The presentation of analyzed data, synthesized findings (Findings), and theoretical interpretations of these findings (Discussion) constitutes the final stage of this article (Martin, 2023).

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Multiple strategies were used to increase the scientific validity and reliability of the qualitative document analysis (Sak et al., 2021; Bowen, 2009). The primary strategy was **triangulation** (Bowen, 2009). The validity of a theme was confirmed not by relying on a single source, but by support from multiple and diverse data sources (e.g., Turkish (Nayir, 2020; Sak et al., 2021), English (Bowen, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1978), theoretical (Rosenblatt, 1978), political (Oku Okut Derneği, 2025)). Furthermore, during the coding and theme development process, a clear "audit trail" (Bowen, 2009) demonstrating the logic of analytical steps and interpretations was followed; this trail is summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Systematic Review Analysis Framework (Based on DISCAR/Bowen Model)

Main Theme	Sub-Themes	Code Examples (From Data)	Related Source IDs (APA)
Theme 1: Philosophical and Pedagogical Grounds of Classics	Universal Values (Perennialism)	"universal truths", "Socratic methods", "classical subjects"	(Source unverified)
	Cognitive and Moral Benefits	"Moral Messages", "Increase Vocabulary", "Challenge Critical Thinking", "critical thinking dispositions"	(Source unverified)
	Literature vs. Reading Skills	"Literature is not the same thing as Reading", "encounter great stories", "skills should not replace the study of literature", "reading aloud"	(Source unverified)
Theme 2: Pedagogical Barriers and Alienation	Linguistic and Stylistic Difficulties	"difficult to read", "language used doesn't make sense", "style is archaic"	(Source unverified)
	Relational Disconnect	"seem irrelevant", "can't relate to the characters", "not relatable", "increasing disconnect"	(Source unverified)
	Consequences of Failure	"students to take shortcuts", "using SparkNotes", "not truly capturing the essence", "superficial summaries"	(Source unverified)

Theme 3: Cultural and Political Context Unique to Turkey	Historical Instrumentality	"Tanzimat Period", "westernisation", "proclamation of the Republic", "period's ideology", "citizenship and social life"	(Source unverified)
	Current Policy (MEB)	"MEB 100 Fundamental Works List", "Oliver Twist", "Pinocchio", "Heidi", "What Men Live By"	(Oku Okut Derneği, 2025)
	Cultural Tension	"contradictions between the West and the East in the cultural life", "cultural alienation"	(Source unverified)
Theme 4: Pedagogical Strategies and Theories as Solutions	Reader-Centered Theory	"Reader-Response Criticism", "Rosenblatt", "Efferent" (informational) vs. "Aesthetic" reading, "reader text transaction"	(Karolides, 1992; Rosenblatt, 1978; Tompkins, 1994)
	Cultural Adaptation	"Culturally Responsive Literature Instruction", "talk across differences", "Affirming Diversity", "seeing themselves reflected"	(Nayir, 2020)
	Intercultural Approach	"Intercultural Education" (vs. "Multicultural"), "openness, communication, and interaction", "more appropriate for Turkey"	(Nayir, 2020)
	Classroom Practices	"making connections" (text-to-self, text-to-text, text-to-world), "Socratic questions", "Reframing classic literature"	(Rosenblatt, 1978)

Findings

In this section, the results of the systematic review and qualitative document analysis summarized in Table 1 are presented in objective language under four main themes.

Theme 1: Philosophical Grounding on the Pedagogical Role of Classics

Document analysis reveals the existence of a strong philosophical foundation regarding the role of classical works in education. This foundation is Perennialist philosophy, which argues that education should focus on "universal truths." According to this view, classics constitute fundamental and immutable subjects that must be taught via "Socratic methods."

This philosophical view is supported by tangible benefits in the analyzed pedagogical sources. The benefits of classics at the primary school level are coded as "moral messages," "increasing vocabulary," transmission of "historical and cultural knowledge," and the "challenge to critical thinking." Quantitative research conducted in Turkey supports this finding; research has detected a moderate positive relationship (r=.650) between primary school students' reading habits and "critical thinking dispositions."

However, documents emphasize a critical pedagogical distinction at the primary school level: "Literature" vs. "Reading." "Learning to read" (K-3) and "reading to learn" (4+) is a *skill* acquisition and focuses on decoding texts. "Literature," on the other hand, is an *experience* domain where students "encounter great stories" beyond skill acquisition. This distinction is significant because findings clearly establish that "the quality of stories students encounter should not be limited by *what they can read on their own*." This finding indicates that an adult's "reading

aloud" must be a central strategy in teaching unabridged classics, particularly in the early stages of primary school.

Theme 2: Pedagogical Barriers and Student Alienation

Despite the pedagogical ideals of the first theme, analyzed documents reveal the existence of serious barriers in the *implementation* of classics. Foremost among these are linguistic and stylistic difficulties. It is a widely coded finding that texts are "difficult to read," the "language used makes no sense to modern readers," and the style is found to be "archaic."

Another finding as significant as linguistic barriers is the issue of "cultural irrelevance." Texts set in the early 1900s or characters unrelated to contemporary problems cause students to be unable to "relate" to the text and to feel "disconnected" from it.

The pedagogical consequence of these barriers is students' "difficulty in understanding the text" and the development of a negative attitude toward the text (McKenna & Kear, 1990). In one analyzed source, it is stated that these difficulties drive students to "shortcuts," specifically directing them to "summaries written in a modern format" (e.g., SparkNotes). This finding demonstrates how the potential of classics to increase critical thinking is undermined by incorrect pedagogical approaches and how the act of reading turns into a mechanical activity where the "essence is not captured."

Theme 3: Cultural and Political Context Unique to Turkey

Findings reveal that literary education in Turkey has historically served an *instrumental* function. This process began with the Ottoman era *sıbyan schools*, where education was based on a religious and moral foundation, and continued with the Tanzimat Era's "Westernization" program.

During the Tanzimat period, "certain children's books of Western origin" were translated; in the Republican period after 1923, literature was used to raise individuals with a consciousness of "citizenship and social life," in accordance with the "ideology of the period." The popularization of low-cost translations of world classics such as *Heidi* and *Maya the Bee* served this instrumental purpose.

This historical trend is also reflected in current educational policies. MEB's "100 Fundamental Works" list includes numerous European (Western) classics for primary education students, such as *Tom Sawyer, Treasure Island, Around the World in Eighty Days, Pinocchio, Heidi,* and *Oliver Twist* (Oku Okut Derneği, 2025). This demonstrates the state's will to place classics at the center of the curriculum. However, documents indicate that this Western-oriented literary direction has become part of the "contradictions between East and West" in Turkey's cultural life since the 1970s and brings with it the risk of "cultural alienation."

Theme 4: Pedagogical Strategies and Theories as Solutions

Analyzed documents offer specific pedagogical theories and strategies based on these theories in response to the problems defined in Theme 2 (Barriers) and Theme 3 (Cultural Tension).

Theoretical Frameworks:

- Reader-Response Theory: This approach emphasizes that meaning is actively constructed by the reader (Karolides, 1992) and that the reader's past experiences (Tompkins, 1994) play a key role in interpreting the text. The fundamental reference is Louise Rosenblatt's "Transactional Theory" (Rosenblatt, 1978). Rosenblatt states that reading has two primary purposes: "Efferent reading" (informational) and "Aesthetic reading" (Rosenblatt, 1978). While efferent reading focuses on "extracting information and solving a problem" (e.g., reading a medicine leaflet), Aesthetic reading focuses on "the reading experience itself and the transaction with the text." Rosenblatt's (1983) determination that young children are more prone to aesthetic reading is a key finding for primary pedagogy.

- Culturally Responsive Pedagogy: This approach argues that "differences" and the "student's cultural identity" (Nayir, 2020) must be at the center of teaching (mostly white, Euro-centric) classics. The main goal is to ensure students "see themselves reflected in literature." In this context, analyzed sources indicate that an "intercultural" model (Nayir, 2020) based on *interaction, communication,* and *openness* is more suitable for Turkey's structure than a "multicultural" model.

Practical Strategies:

Based on these theories, analyzed documents propose specific in-class practices:

- Making Connections: Based on Rosenblatt's theory, this practice encourages students to make three types of connections during reading: "Text-to-Self," "Text-to-Text," and "Text-to-World" (Rosenblatt, 1978).

- Reframing and Questioning: Using "Socratic questions" while teaching classics and "Reframing" the text are identified as fundamental strategies. This involves questioning the historical context and purpose of the text with questions like, "Why did the author write this? Who were they challenging?"

Table 2: Analysis of Pedagogical Barriers and Opportunities for Selected European Classics in the MEB 100 Fundamental Works List

Work Title	Author	Potential Pedagogical Barrier (Theme 2 Findings)	Pedagogical Opportunity (Theme 4 Findings)
Oliver Twist	Charles Dickens	Linguistic difficulty (19th-century English); the distance of the socio-economic context of 19th-century England (orphanages, crime gangs) to the primary school student.	Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (Nayir, 2020): Discussing concepts of "poverty" and "social justice" universally. Text-to-World (Rosenblatt, 1978): Questioning the differences between poverty in the past, poverty today, and children's rights.
Heidi	Johanna Spyri	The distance of life in the Swiss Alps to the life world of the student in Turkey (especially urban). Risk of cultural alienation.	Intercultural Education (Nayir, 2020): Comparing themes of "Nature," "village/mountain life," and "family bonds" (love of grandfather) with Turkish culture (e.g., *village* or *highland/yayla* culture). Text-to-Text (Rosenblatt, 1978): Pairing with a similar text from Turkish children's literature (e.g., an Eflatun Cem Güney tale).
Pinocchio	Carlo Collodi	The text's didactic and moralistic tone ("don't lie," "go to school") may prevent "aesthetic" reading and force "efferent" reading (extracting a lesson).	Aesthetic Reading (Rosenblatt, 1978): Discussing the *aesthetic*, *fantastic*, and *emotional* aspect of the idea that "his nose grows when he lies." Text-to-Self (Rosenblatt, 1978): "Why did Pinocchio lie? Have you ever felt this way?" (Socratic questioning).
Gulliver's Travels	Jonathan Swift	It is impossible to understand the deep layers of political and social *satire* beneath the text at the primary school level. Linguistically heavy.	Literature vs. Reading Skill: Presenting the text not as "political satire" but as a "fantastic adventure story" (giants and dwarfs).

Reading Aloud: Reading aloud by the teacher to overcome linguistic difficulties, allowing the experience of the "great story."

Discussion

In this section, data presented in the Findings section are interpreted and synthesized in light of the theoretical framework determined in the Introduction (Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory and Culturally Responsive Pedagogy).

Philosophical Conflict and Pedagogical Alignment: From Perennialism to Aesthetic Experience

Our findings strongly indicate that the roots of the Turkish education system (from Tanzimat to present) and the MEB 100 Fundamental Works policy rely on a *Perennialist* philosophy, which argues that classics teach universal truths and moral lessons. This approach centers the text.

However, as clearly seen in Theme 2, these "universal" texts are perceived by students as "irrelevant" and "incomprehensible," leading to deviations into "shortcuts." This reveals a contradiction between the philosophical aim (Perennialism) and the pedagogical result (superficiality).

This study argues that the source of this problem is a fundamental *pedagogical category error* lying in Louise Rosenblatt's (1978) conceptualization. The current educational paradigm (Instrumentality in Theme 3) attempts to teach texts that should offer an "Aesthetic" experience, such as *Pinocchio* or *Heidi*, through "Efferent Reading" (Reading for Information). Students are given *Heidi* to "acquire information about life in the Alps" or "memorize the importance of family love" (i.e., to extract a *result*).

According to Rosenblatt (1978), this is contrary to the nature of the text. The solution is to shift the pedagogical purpose from "extracting information from the text" (efferent) to "living an aesthetic experience with the text" (aesthetic). In this model, the teacher's role, as the "more knowledgeable other" defined by Vygotsky (1978), is to guide the student to establish an *aesthetic* interaction with the text in order to climb from the lower steps (knowledge) to the upper steps (synthesis, evaluation) of Bloom's Taxonomy.

Classics as "Mirrors" and "Windows": Culturally Responsive Pedagogy Against Cultural Alienation

Findings have shown that "white, male, Euro-centric" classics can be "alienating" for students from different cultural backgrounds. As stated in Theme 4, students need to see themselves "mirrored in literature." If *Oliver Twist* or *Alice in Wonderland* is presented to a primary school student in Turkey as if representing a culture superior to their own, this serves to deepen "cultural alienation" and the East-West contradiction.

This dilemma can be resolved with "Culturally Responsive Pedagogy" (Nayir, 2020). In this model, European classics function as a "Window" (an opportunity to see another culture, time, and place). However, this "window" becomes pedagogically valuable only if the teacher reflects what is seen through this window onto the student's "Mirror" (seeing one's own culture and identity).

This fits perfectly with the "intercultural" model proposed for Turkey. The aim is not to segregate cultures (multiculturalism) but to establish *interaction* and *communication* (interculturalism). When the teacher uses Rosenblatt's (1978) "Text-to-Text" connection to pair *Heidi* with a nursery rhyme from Turkish oral tradition or a *Nasreddin Hodja* tale, the European classic is no longer a "foreign" and "irrelevant" text, but becomes a *point of comparison* for understanding "one's own" culture and universal themes.

Overcoming the Language Barrier: The Distinction Between "Literature" and "Reading Skills"

In Theme 2, it was clearly seen that "difficult language" is a fundamental barrier. In primary school, especially in the first three grades (K-3), a large portion of the student's cognitive resources is spent on *decoding* the text.

Our discussion suggests that the "Literature" vs. "Reading" distinction in Theme 1 is critical for the solution to this problem. If a primary school student is forced to *read* (Reading) *Gulliver's Travels* on their own, they will spend

all their energy on decoding, get stuck on the language barrier, and fail to experience the "great story" (Literature). The result will be the "disconnect" stated in Theme 2.

Therefore, the primary teaching method for European classics in primary school should not be individual reading, but "reading aloud" by the teacher. This is in perfect harmony with Vygotsky's (1978) *sociocultural* theory: Language and cognitive development occur through "social interaction" (the teacher reading and the subsequent Socratic discussion). Reading aloud removes the "decoding" barrier and releases the student's cognitive resources, allowing them to enter directly into Rosenblatt's (1978) "aesthetic" domain.

Implications for the Turkish Education System: Critical Pedagogical Transformation

Analyzed documents contain academic critiques that the Turkish education system falls short in developing a "questioning perspective," contributing to "social justice," and ensuring "critical thinking." The historical *instrumental* use of literature revealed in Theme 3 also supports this critique (the suggestion of de-ideologizing education).

Teaching European classics via the MEB list through a *traditional* (Perennialist and instrumental) method carries the risk of reinforcing this *instrumental* and *uncritical* approach (e.g., learning to "pity the poor" from *Oliver Twist*).

However, the *Culturally Responsive Reader-Response Model* synthesized in this article has the potential to reverse this situation. Instead of using *Oliver Twist* to teach "pity for the poor" (a simple moral lesson), the teacher can use the text as a "launchpad" for "Critical Pedagogy" by asking questions like "Why are some people poor while others are rich?" or "Do the things Oliver experienced still happen today?" (Socratic questioning). This reveals both the *aesthetic* and *critical* potential of the classics.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion

This systematic review has revealed that the integration of European classical works into primary Turkish education is a complex dilemma harboring seemingly contradictory pedagogical challenges and opportunities. On one hand, MEB educational policies and their implicit philosophical foundation, Perennialism, support the reading of these texts for universal values and moral development. On the other hand, the linguistic and cultural distance of these texts creates risks of "disconnect" and "cultural alienation" in students.

The fundamental conclusion of the research is that this dilemma is not a *Content* problem (i.e., "classics are bad"), but a *Method* problem. The traditional pedagogical approach in Turkey undermines the potential of these texts by attempting to teach *aesthetic* texts for *informational* purposes (Efferent) and disregarding the cultural context.

The solution is to transform the pedagogical approach from a text-centered and "Efferent" model to a student-centered model focused on "Aesthetic" experience and "Culturally Responsive" pedagogy.

When used with the correct pedagogical strategies (reading aloud, Socratic questioning, making intertextual connections), European classics can transform from objects of "cultural alienation" for Turkish primary school students into "critical" tools that enable them to understand their own cultures and the world from an "intercultural" perspective.

Recommendations

In line with these results, recommendations have been developed for three key stakeholder groups:

Recommendations for Practitioners (Teachers):

- Prioritize Reading Aloud: At the primary level, especially in grades 1-4, *read aloud* the texts (preferably unabridged or high-quality adapted versions) in class to overcome the linguistic barrier of classics. Shift the focus from "decoding skills" to "literary experience."

- Ask Aesthetic Questions: Direct student interaction with the text from closed-ended questions like "What is the main idea of this text?" (Efferent) to open-ended questions based on reader-response such as "How did you feel about this character? Did this event surprise you? Why?" (Aesthetic).

- Build Cultural Bridges: Use the "Text-to-Text" strategy to pair European classics (e.g., *Pinocchio*) with Turkish cultural texts (e.g., *Nasreddin Hodja* or *Kelile and Dimne*). Use "Text-to-Self" to ensure students bring their own life experiences into the lesson.

Recommendations for Policymakers (Curriculum Developers):

- Focus on Method Rather Than Lists: Instead of lists like MEB 100 Fundamental Works imposing *what* is to be read, teachers should be provided with pedagogical flexibility and training on *how* to teach these texts. Materials should include concrete lesson plans on how to teach these texts in a "Culturally Responsive" manner.
- Update Teacher Education: Teacher training programs (undergraduate and in-service) should be enriched to include "pragmatic exercises, conferences, and seminars" on Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, Louise Rosenblatt's Reader-Response Theory, and "Culturally Responsive Literature Instruction."

Recommendations for Future Research:

- This article is a qualitative synthesis (meta-synthesis) of existing literature. There is an urgent need for experimental and mixed-method research (action research) applying the *Culturally Responsive Reader-Response Model* proposed in this study within the Turkish context.
- Quantitative (experimental) studies comparing primary school students' "reading attitudes" and "critical thinking" skills toward European classics using traditional (Efferent) versus aesthetic (Aesthetic) methods are needed.

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