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An Investigation on the Mektepli Newspaper Published between the Years of 1932 and 1935

(Periodic Function- Publication- Closing down)

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Abstract

Media, which has a special place in our social life, has a worthy function in education field like educating people and also entertaining during the education period. The need of regular and permanent presentation to most people of science which is developing constantly made firstly newspapers and then magazines go into our media lives. In this research which survey model is used; contribution of the Mektepli Newspaper is investigated considering that it was the first long lasting newspaper in the first years of declaration of Republic and its contributions to Turkish child journalism and magazine publishing and children literature.

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1. Introduction

The child is like a silk bridge erected between us and the future. Constructing this bridge and educating our children, the inheritors of our cultural heritage, in the best manner definitely rests with us. Works that colorize the imaginary world of the child, enrich the imagination of the child, assist in the child using language correctly, comprehensibly, and effectively, and guide the child to what is correct, good, and true are investigated under the scope of children's literature. The birth of children's literature begins with the thought of innovation and opening out to the west. The appearance of children's literature in the Ottoman Period coincides with the Tanzimat Reform Era. Changes in political and social areas during and after the Tanzimat Period were first conveyed to the public through newspapers and magazines. In order to ensure the permanency and sound sustainability of these changes, children, who shall carry innovation to the future, were determined as the target group. Accordingly, litterateurs of the Tanzimat Reform Period aiming to form an extensive reader group, considered publishing newspapers and magazines for children. Thus, the necessary emphasis started to be laid on children's literature, primarily on children's newspapers and magazines. The first newspapers and magazines published for children were issued as daily newspaper supplements and unfortunately the Tanzimat period children's newspapers and magazines were unable to be published for long periods of time due to difficulties. Together with the proclamation of the Republic, which completely changed the political and social order in Turkey, and the subsequent alphabet reform, positive developments were observed in the publication of children's newspapers and magazines. By taking into

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consideration the importance of written sources, which are among mass medium contributing to the social and cultural development of the child and published for the purpose of educating, in education, the subject of the study has been formed accordingly.

2. Method

The survey model was utilized in the study. The survey model is a research approach with the objective of describing a case in the past or present as it is. The case, individual or object that is the subject of the study, is attempted to be defined in its own conditions and as it is. The thing that is important is observing without attempting to make a change to the existing (Karasar, 2005: 77). The quantitative research model was utilized in the collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. In this study utilizing the survey model, the researcher accessed all (148) issues of the Mektepli Newspaper published between the years of 1923 and 1940 at the Ankara National Library with the code of “1960 SB 38”. In line with this, the problem of the study attempted to seek an answer to the question of “How were the periodic function, publication, and closure of the Mektepli Newspaper published between the years of 1932 and 1935 actualized?”

3. Findings and Interpretation

The findings obtained at the end of the study are as follows under the concerned titles.

3.1. *The Mektepli Newspaper Published Between the Years of 1932 and 1935*

3.1.1. *The Periodic Function of the Mektepli Newspaper*

Ercan (2011: 36) expresses the 1930's as follows: “The 1930's can be expressed as the years in which mostly revolutions covering the phenomena of secularism in social areas were planned due to Atatürk's revolutions in administrative and political areas being completed. The 1930's, in which regulations that arranged social life and ensured that the life of Turkish people was raised to a modern level, shall in this sense, take its place in history as the process, in which the foundations of modern Turkey were laid, the gap with modern western societies were closed through secular practices, and the lost period was compensated. The 1930's in the history of the Republic of Turkey shall shed light on the Turkey of today as ‘the renewed and renewing years’.” The Mektepli newspaper published in the early years after the establishment of the Republic also witnessed the historic events of the years it existed. It was the reporter of reforms such as the opening of community centers (Halkevi), the Language Reform, and the acceptance of the Surname Act and undertook the role of being an instrument conveying important information to future generations. By emphasizing the significance of the Alphabet Revolution, information was presented to children in many areas out of school. It was in the position of being a communication instrument arousing curiosity and enhancing the will of children in having them acquire cultural, scientific, critical, and modern information. While there was a tendency to have the Turkish language forgotten under the dominance of foreign nations, with the success achieved in the war of National Independence, efforts to regain the use of pure Turkish rendered the Language Revolution necessary. This important development experienced regarding the Turkish language are activities that aim to save our language from the dominance of foreign languages to be performed under the title of nativisation works in language and called the “Language reform (Dil İnkılabı)” in the newspapers of the time (Ercan, 2011: 46). As is known, while the efforts of the administration and public were continuing for achieving a pure language, on July 12, 1932 the Society for Research on the Turkish Language (later called the Turkish Language Association) was established. One of the facts revealed by the Language Revolution is that the attitude of the state in the achievement of nativisation and language reform activities in any country and undertaking this activity as a nation is of great significance. Undoubtedly, the theses read, discussions conducted, and activities for determining the future of the Turkish Language in the Turkish Language Congresses, the first of which was convened on September 26, 1932 under the chair of Atatürk, were effective (Aksan, 2007: 58-61). Efforts for the establishment of the language congress can be observed in an article in the 3rd issue of the newspaper on “the Gazi (meaning veteran and referring to Atatürk) invited those engaged in linguistic activities to the language congress”

and Mehmet Sami's article in the 4th edition titled "Towards our native (pure) language". In this article, M. Sami calls out to readers and states that they should rebel against foreign languages and foreign articles and take care to read, write, and speak in Turkish. By emphasizing that the Turk does not have a need for Persian or Arabic and has a glorious language just like its people, and also the Turkish people were called for a Turkish Language campaign. "Can one nation speak two languages? How can we understand each other if our intellectuals speak another language and our villagers speak another... The congress convened here at the Dolmabahçe Palace, convened here for the purpose of dismissing foreign languages and replacing them with Turkish, which is our own property and language. The congress made its resolution and finalized. Regarding this work, we all must work together in order to fulfill the requests of our head teacher and brother." M. Sami (Nu.: 4, p.: 3). For the purpose of preventing difficulties and complications experienced in social life, with the Surname Act, which was ratified on June 21, 1934 and put into force on July 2, 1934, it was obligatory for each individual to have a surname in addition to their first name. These names had to be Turkish and not independent of Turkish traditions and customs and not in violation of morals, and not funny or humiliating. Every Turkish citizen was obliged to adopt a surname within 2 years at the latest as of July 2, 1934, when the concerned decree was ratified with the Surname Act taking effect, otherwise, the government was to provide a surname for those who did not adopt a surname (Sakaoğlu, 1984: 245, cited by: Kalkan, 2012: 2657). The reflection of the surname reform was on nearly every page of the newspaper. Starting with the 121st issue, the names of those adopting surnames were published in the last page of the newspaper. With regards to this matter, Karayel, the owner and editor of the newspaper, in his column titled "Head to head (Baş Başa)" in the 117th issue of the newspaper published an article titled "My Surname" and shared how he adopted his surname with his readers. The newspaper dated April 19, 1934 included poems and the article of the editor and reported the April 23 National Sovereignty and Children's Day. In the article of M. Sami titled "April 23", he cited a memory he experienced before the proclamation of the Republic and mentioned of the position and stature of children and emphasized that the children were lucky and should be aware of the value of the time they lived in, during those days, in which steps were taken for a modern future. "I clearly remember that I was a ten year old child, I asked my late mother: Why don't we see the sultan? Why aren't there pictures of him? My late mother replied: "Shut up! You have become an infidel. Don't you dare say this anywhere else!" I was surprised. What had I done to my mother. Ultimately, I only wanted to see the picture of a person like us. God forbid! If I had asked the question, which I asked my mother, to my teacher or friends at school, they would have immediately complained about us and they would have thrown my mother and father in a dungeon. Dear children, what I have told you above is not a story, it's the truth. Today, you are free, today you are happy, today you are together and a partner with us (you are equal). The glorious and unique rescuer of the Republic of Turkey is by your side and paying attention to you. Won't you celebrate and enjoy with all your heart, shout out, laugh, and play for the love of the Republic and this beautiful present of the Gazi?" M. Sami (Nu.: 83, p.: 3). With the thought of raising a youth that comprehended the requirements of the modern world, Mr. Reşit Galip was appointed as the Minister of National Education in 1932 (Özüçetin & Nadar, 2010). In the 2nd issue of the newspaper, in his article titled "Happy News for My Student Friends", M. Sami notified that Mr. Reşit Galip was appointed as the Minister of Education. In this article, he explained the duties of the prime minister and ministers, why some were appointed to various duties, and the difference of this circumstance with the Sultanate system. In his article titled "Child of the Revolution" in the 24th issue of the newspaper, M. Sami expressed the characteristics that Turkish children should have. "The child of the revolution cannot act with a withered and corrupt entity like a carob in the manners of eating, dressing and in his/her philosophical thoughts... The past must be buried in the soil... In order not to make the dervish lodge, sheikh, madrasah, and fanatic rise from the grave, the child of revolution should step over the grave where this run-down mentality was buried with a strong and faithful thought... The revolution! Yes the revolution is ours. The child of the revolution is a mass. The child of revolution does not know any other powers and does not pursue individual powers. S/he has the unity of heart and feeling. It is integral faith, integral power, and integral existence. Its sound is one, its movement is one... The Turkey of the Republic is the existence of the child." (Nu.: 24, p.: 3). In the first and the last pages of the Mektepli Newspaper celebrating the 10th anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic with its 58th issue there was a section where the readers expressed their feelings and ideas. "The Creed of the Turkish Child" was also included in this issue through M. Sami's article titled "the Child of the Republic." Along with poems sent by the readers, Vahdet Gültekin's poem called "Our Republic," and M. Sami's article titled "Those Rescuing the Turkish Nation" were presented to all the readers of the Mektepli Newspaper regardless of them being

adults or children and it was stated that the Turkish nation underwent extremely hard and painful periods and then reached the contemporary level of civilization. Regarding certain days and weeks our values attempted to be adopted by our children and national and religious holidays were presented to readers through the Mektepli Newspaper. The Mektepli Newspaper celebrated the “Domestic Goods Week”, which we celebrate, as the “National Savings Day” by including proverbs and idioms concerning this week in its 118th issue and in its issue dated December 21, 1933, the “National Savings Day” was covered with the column titled “Sung by Three Villager Children” with poems. Through these poems, it was attempted that children learned to be economic and use domestic goods produced by us for the wealth and development of our nation.

3.1.2. *The Publishing of the Mektepli Newspaper*

M. Sami Karayel, who was the owner and editor-in-chief of the Mektepli newspaper, published the newspaper between September 22, 1932 and July 18, 1935, introduced his newspaper to his readers in his following expressions: The “Mektepli newspaper is a friend that gives pleasure and joy to you like it is your scientific repertoire.” M. Sami (nu.27, p.3). The Mektepli Newspaper printed with the new letters presenting different services and aiming to inform their readers in every field was published as 148 issues (6 volumes). In the 124th issue Nusret Safa Coşkun joined in the management of the newspaper as editorial office translator. The Mektepli Newspaper printed in different printing houses was a children’s newspaper based in Istanbul. The first 30 issues were printed in Istanbul Halk Printing House, the issues between the 31st and the 35th in Istanbul Letafet Printing House, the issues between the 36th and the 54th in Istanbul Hamit Bey Printing House, and the issues between the 56th and the 59th in Istanbul Selâmet Printing House, and the issues up to the 148th issue in Istanbul Sebat Printing House. All issues of the Mektepli Newspaper consisting of 148 issues (6 volumes) in total were presented to sale on Thursdays at the price of 5 kuruses. The page numbers of the newspaper varied between 16 and 20. In addition, it was observed that the page number was increased to 24 with the addition of texts such as dictionaries or novels. As for the Mektepli Newspaper’s subscription terms, annual subscription was 250 kuruses, six-month subscription was 125 kuruses, and three-month subscription was 65 kuruses. Annual subscription for foreigners started with 2 Dollars; it was raised to 4 liras in the 27th issue and to 5 liras after the 94th issue. As for the Mektepli Newspaper’s advertisement terms, a full page was 1500 kuruses, half page was 750 kuruses, and a quarter of a page was 400 kuruses. Advertisements and commercials that were placed at intervals up to the 121st issue became permanent after the 121st issue. One advertisement in minimum and four advertisements in maximum were placed permanently from the 126th issue to the 148th issue. Advertisements are generally placed in the 19th and 20th pages of the newspaper. The advertisements such as raffle, sanitary baths, the opening of music halls as well as that of İş bank, Sümerbank, sports equipment, vacuum cleaner, books and stationery, shoemaker, and photography materials were also placed in. Although it was not known who selected and arranged the cover photographs and pictures of the Mektepli Newspaper, they were known as activity photographs of certain days and weeks, the photographs of readers responding to readers’ questionnaires, photographs of club members, and the articles within the content of newspaper.

3.1.3. *The Closing down of the Mektepli Newspaper*

Mektepli Newspaper did not explain in any of its issues that they made the decision of closing down the newspaper; however, as a result of the research it was observed that the newspaper gave signals slowly for closing down from the 140th issue due to the articles in the newspaper or the declines in subscription prices. In the 140th issue of the newspaper in M. Sami Karayel’s article titled “The Fall of the Leaves” the fall of the leaves was told to children and he expressed that this fall did not happen only in trees and fall season and stated that the magazines and newspapers experienced this situation when the month of May came because he remarked that the month of May was a summer month and that it coincided with the children’s exams and that it was a season for sea and that people spent their time for recreation and in beaches rather than reading novels or stories. As a result of these, he told his readers that the sales of magazines and newspapers declined and that colorful newspaper pages turned into a single color like a dry leaf and that the newspapers and magazines that did not ascribe such an “aftermath” to themselves reported their own ends with the news of “*We are entering holiday season....We will start to publish at the beginning of the year...*” and at the least he tried to express the situation in which they were. An advertisement

telling that a cheap subscription period that would take a month and a half was initiated for readers was placed under this article. According to this advertisement, one –year subscription fee of the newspaper was lowered from 250 kuruses to 150 kuruses, six-month subscription fee from 125 kuruses to 80 kuruses, three-month subscription fee from 65 kuruses to 40 kuruses. In the 141st issue of the newspaper an article was published under the title of “*We are going to pieces! (Nu.: 141, p:2)*” stating that the magazine was coming to an end. In this article it was told that the newspapers and magazines within the struggle to survive went into different efforts of increasing their sales. M. Sami Karayel, who was the owner and editor-in-chief of the newspaper, expressed the situation in which he was and his sorrows in his article. Although there were articles he wrote under the identity of editor-in-chief in nearly each issue of the newspapers until this issue. Such his articles were encountered in none of the issues starting from the 141st issue of the newspaper. The 148th issue of the newspaper became the final issue and it ceased to function in a quiet and retiring manner.

4. Result and Recommendations

Accordingly, depending on the research findings we can say that the Mektepli newspaper, which started its publication life in 1932, aimed at raising a republican, idealist, innovative, productive, and healthy child with the articles it published, the activities it organized, and the discourses it used while addressing to the children in newspaper. Selected subjects and the way of covering them were discussed in an updated manner and as realistic as updated while forming the content of the newspaper which was in the position of a means of communication to reflect the news, events, and scientific developments relating to children’s world as well as meeting the child’s needs. While the articles in the content entertaining the readers, they make them acquire reading enjoyment and habit, increase the learning desire, and induce them to think and reason about social events in the period. The Mektepli Newspaper played a major role in taking steps towards contemporary civilization level and handing down the revolutions to children in this period where the Republic was just established. It believed the necessity for Turkish people to duly perform their duties in protecting the republic of Turkey and raising contemporary civilization level and that it considered to convey all these to its readers as a duty for itself. It aimed to raise individuals making decisions independently as a conscious citizen, developing his/her value judgments and being aware of his/her rights and responsibilities. It also gave importance to raise productive individuals that are interested in developing areas of the society s/he lived in and at the same time protecting its historic and cultural heritage. The matters such as the importance of being diligent, earnest, and challenging, behavioral patterns of man using his reason, patriotism, the effort of constituting language unity that will facilitate for the formation of national and cultural awareness became the matters the Mektepli newspaper emphasized. Children’s newspapers and magazines that are the living history of our ties with the past like the Mektepli newspaper have the characteristics of basic sources for the genre of children’s literature. Thus, examining the studies on newspapers and magazines published in the periods coinciding with the first years of proclamation of the Republic serves as a model for the new ones. Publishing Children’s newspapers and magazines in the past for a long time even under adverse conditions is an indicator for their successes. Today opportunities are so favorable that the products of children’s literature we will present to our children must be well-supported and understandable as far as possible. Children’s literature researchers, writers, illustrators, and publishers have major duties regarding this subject.

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