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# The most commonly used visual images in Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes and the meanings attributed to these images

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Nasreddin Hodja was a humorous figure known for his anecdotes that he believed to live in Aksehir in the 1200s. He was also a philosophical person remembered for his comic stories, anecdotes and wise sayings. He is known in most of the geography which dominated the Ottoman Empire, and is owned by many nations. He is an important figure not only in Turkish literature but also in the history of world literature with anecdotes that are valid and universal in the whole time of history and short stories that emphasize human relations with a sense of humor. The reasons that make this research a requirement include; The frequent use of his anecdotes in the first stage of primary education as a teaching method for literacy learning, the existence of researches that were focused on the improvement of literacy skills with anecdotes, the lack of any research related to the visual images often encountered in the anecdotes. In addition, this research is very important in terms of emphasizing the importance of using images in education. In this research, more than two hundred anecdote visual images belonging to Nasreddin Hodja were examined. In order to exemplify the subject, only two illustrations from the images of 15 of the most well-known anecdotes belonging to the Hodja that best express the topic were given. This study was performed with document review method and descriptive analysis technique, which is one of the qualitative analysis techniques used to investigate the images. Among these images, 15 of the most prominent anecdotes images were selected and two images were used in each anecdote. These visuals were evaluated according to the meaning they contained, visual messages they delivered and the images were interpreted also according to their ability to reflect the desired message. It has been observed that his big white quilted turban, white beard and mustache are the most used images, these images reflect his personality as being an educated scholar and a wise person, and his rosary symbolizes the fact that he is also a devout Muslim. The caftan he wears is always visualized as flamboyant and longer than the other characters in the anecdotes and this was used to emphasize that he is the protagonist in all the anecdotes. Besides the visual images in the anecdote books, studies on the images of the cartoons, which has increasingly diversified in recent times, can be done to make the students entertained and learn more easily and permanently.

**Key words:** Nasreddin Hodja, Visual, Nasreddin Hodja images, imagery.

## INTRODUCTION

### Nasreddin Hodja and His Life

Nasreddin Hodja was a great Turkish philosopher and humor master who has become a symbol of the combination of humor, critical thinking and mind. The anecdotes belonging to him have been passed from generation to generation for centuries.

He is one of the most important anecdote characters in the world known with his own name or some other names, from the east to the west, from the north to the south, or from a kind known to him or with similar genres (Sakaoğlu, 2009). In the researches about Nasreddin Hodja, various opinions have been put forward as to whether or not he had lived or not. The diversity of these views and the lack of available documents constituted the biggest challenge to the researcher (Tör.). Most of the written sources from the past, confirm that Nasreddin Hodja lived.

He was born in 1208 in Hortu village of Sivrihisar, firstly he took Madrasah education in Sivrihisar. Upon his father's death, he returned to Hortu and became an imam in the village. In 1237, he settled in Akşehir (29 years old). He died in 1284 in Akşehir. He had a good education, he worked as an imam, mufti, teacher and *cadi* (muslim judge). According to a rumor, he taught in the madrasa, and because he had been in the service as a *cadi*, he was called 'Nasuriddin Hacı' and later on this name was changed to Nasreddin Hodja. He was the beloved of the people for centuries with his humor in a different style. Because of the extreme love of people for him, information about his life was mixed with rumors and received extraordinary qualities. Nasreddin Hodja, who is known in most of the geography dominated by the Ottoman Empire, is owned by many nations.

Nowadays, there are hundreds of anecdotes attributed to him in both public and printed books. Many anecdotes belonging to the regional clause types have been connected to the more powerful type Nasreddin Hodja, when the effect of the regional type is reduced and thus hundreds of different anecdotes that have different places and subjects have emerged. Of course, it is not possible that all these anecdotes belong to Nasreddin Hodja, but the public continues to describe these anecdotes as his (Bozyiğit, 1987).

Nasreddin Hodja, who has become an important figure not only in Turkey but also in world history with his humorous insights on human relations, universal and timeless anecdotes and stories, is also referred to with names such as Hodja, Molla, Haji, and Effendi. He is usually caricaturized as sitting reversed on a donkey. A statue built in the same way and Nasreddin Hoca Tomb built in the name of Nasreddin Hodja are flooded by visitors in Akşehir. There are also some rumors that he met with the Seljuk sultans, established intimacy with Mevlana Celalettin, talked with Timur who lived at least seventy years after him, and even appeared in a few places at the same time.

In the Turkish folk anecdote tradition, Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes have an important place. It is a serious and discrete subject that "the Turkish nation like to express many issues from Nasreddin Hodja's language and mouth, to judge, decide and criticise matters through his sanity and intelligence. This common power is the common power of the people in the form of Nasreddin Hodja" (Yıldırım, 1999). Several studies have been performed on the anecdotes of Nasreddin Hodja and the anecdotes have been examined from various aspects. The anecdotes which belong to Hodja have been discussed and certain characteristics were determined. According to these determinations, there is strict adherence to the moral rules in the Nasreddin Hodja anecdotes, which are often used for short narrations. The lesson in the anecdotes coincides with the rules of morality and religion. In the anecdotes, respect for religion, state, tradition and human personality is essential. These texts do not include elements such as banality, obscenity, drunkenness, shame and blasphemy. The general mood of the anecdotes is optimistic. Characteristics such as sense of humor, thinking, obfuscation, teaching and attracting attention are all seen in the anecdotes. The main feature is to make you think rather than laugh. The sense of humor that is ongoing around Hodja is provided by factors such as "Repartee; referring to irrational situations and statements; cheerful "situation" and "words"; contrast; word games; amazing wit games; mock death; unexpected, unimaginable reasons, unpredictability, unexpected, surprising behavior and words; poetry, mani; exaggeration; lampoon; connotation" (Tokmakçioğlu, 1981). The most beautiful examples of social criticism can be seen in the anecdotes of instructional elements. He is a wise person that cannot be bowdlerized who enlightens all aspects of Turkish society, including the private life (Özdemir, 2010)

Based on speech style, there are no fancy words and unnecessary details in the anecdotes. From time to time, due to the subject, Arabic and Persian words can be seen. As y Özdemir described "Nasreddin Hodja have immortalized Turkish humor memory and wisdom, by spreading it to new geographies and civilizations. Nasreddin Hodja's anecdote collection is the cultural heritage and memory of mankind" (Tekşan, 2008), Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes perfectly combine smartness and criticism. He was depicted in a cute way, in all the books to which he contributed. There is a message to be given in all anecdotes and stories. It is able to reach quite a large audience even with its visual expression power.

Nasreddin Hodja was a humor master and was liked by all of us. There are visual images frequently repeated in these anecdotes. The most common of these images is the quilted turban of Hodja. Then comes his white beard and mustache. He is illustrated mostly with a rosary in his hand, wearing a caftan and a white dress or a shalwar inside it. The donkey was his most indispensable companion and friend. And then, people were always around him, where he can present his personality as a humorist. His anecdotes

provide a lot of information about the period he lived.

### **Nasreddin Hodja and his anectodes**

Being a repartee, he managed to both surprise everyone and make people laugh. Nasreddin Hoca, who approached the problems encountered in social life with a humorous style, explained the characteristics, thoughts and views of life of the people of Anatolia in their anecdotes. Directing people towards good and right, and revealing the flaws and faults while combining them with jokes lies in the core of the anecdotes. As a person who knew individuals and societies very well in terms of every aspect, Hodja reflected the disruptions in family, neighborhood, friendship and business relations with his own style, and combined them with the jokes to give life lessons to people. The anecdotes of Nasreddin Hodja have the features of Turkish oral literature as being short, clear and simple. Plainspoken and clear expressions are used without addressing any indirect expressions. At the end of the events described in the jokes, there was always a lesson. Thanks to his anecdotes, whose main purpose was to encourage people to think, he is recognized both in Turkish society and in other countries, and is known even in today's world. The value of Nasreddin Hodja is not measured by the events of his life, but rather by the delicacy of the elements of meaning, satire and ridicule which he and the people speak.

It was understood from the examination of the jokes, which were claimed to be his, that rather than expressing a certain period of time, Anatolian people's way of life, the jokes reflected elements of humor, the type of fun and entertainment, the ability to praise and dedication.

The focus of the elements that make up the jokes about him are love, satire, praise, ridicule, having the laugh on, dragging himself into contradiction, preferring the softness with a very thin and barbed utterance against the rigidity of Shariah. While he was saying these, he took contradictory roles such as scholar, uninformed, obscene, docile, insubstantial, shy, attacking, confused, cunning, cowardly, dashing. In contradiction with the situation of the other is the dominant element of the jokes. These elements constitute the products of thought, reflecting the attitude of Anatolian people towards certain events.

He was revealed as a humorous focus, reflecting the feelings of the people. The person speaking uses the words of the person who makes him to speak, so that the public speaks with the language of Nasreddin Hodja. Nasreddin Hodja, in all of his jokes, did not emerge as a non-physical being, but emerged related to an eventual occurrence connected with a real life. He expressed the reaction or confirmation of the incident with one of the humorous joke types.

The events that he witnessed usually happened among normal people. Hodja did not come around the aristocrats or the high palace people or entered very rarely. For instance, he has no jokes about the Seljuk sultans, who are said to have met him. The joke related to Timur, "bath, Timur and peshtemal", was produced thereafter because he

had lived long before the period of Timur. Public admiration produced a ridicule such as "I am saying to you my daughter, listen my daughter-in-law" by stepping up Hodja in front of Timur, who is an emperor emitting fear around, in the Turkish bath (hammam). In fact, here, the high palace people who saw themselves above the people or society were the satirized group.

The story books of Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes have been enriched with the images of Nasreddin Hodja and his donkey, the local region where he lived, and the characters of that region (Figure 1 to Figure 20).

He had an in depth knowledge of people and the society in all aspects; his wits expressed the defective sides of the relations of people in family, neighborhood, friendship, and business that he saw in the community in order to correct the corrupt aspects and advise to direct them in integrity. Sociologists and psychologists have greatly benefited from his jokes to learn about the people, the community and examine various aspects of them.

He was a very popular humor master who gained a worldwide reputation. He also gave many clues about the socio-cultural life of his time-period. Even in this respect, it has been the subject of many researches. The positive influence of his anecdotes on reading and writing skills, especially in the first stage of literacy teaching in primary education has increased the number of researches that focuses on relations between anecdotes and literacy skills in the field of Turkish language.

For those who want to learn more about the research on Nasreddin Hodja, some research examples are presented below.

There are many different researches on Nasreddin hodja and his jokes, the examples are here; Özdemir N (2008). "Kültürel Ekonomik İmge Olarak Nasreddin Hoca", Sakaoğlu (1992). Türk Fıkraları ve Nasreddin Hoca, Şanlı (2009). "Nasreddin Hoca Fıkralarında Kültürel Unsurlar" Tör (1989). "Nasreddin Hoca Fıkralarındaki Eğitim Mesajları", Temizkan (2011). "Türkçe Öğretiminde Yaratıcı Düşünmeyi Geliştirme Bakımından Nasreddin Hoca Fıkraları", Türkmen (1996). "Mizahta Üstünlük Teorisi ve Nasreddin Hoca Fıkraları", Türkmen (1990). "Nasreddin Hoca Fıkralarında Söz ve Hareket, Türkmen (2008). "Türkçenin Söz Varlığında Nasreddin Hoca'nın Yeri, Artur (2011). "Çukurova Fıkra Anlatma Geleneğinde Nasrettin Hoca Etkisi", Barın (2008). "Yabancılara Türkçe Öğretiminde Nasrettin Hoca Fıkralarının Yeri", Başgöz, İ. (1999). Geçmişten Günümüze Nasreddin Hoca, Boratav (1996). Nasreddin Hoca, Güney (1957). Nasreddin Hoca Fıkraları.

### **Image**

Image is defined in Turkish dictionary as; "1. The thing designed in the mind and desired to happen, dream. 2. General appearance, impression. 3. Psychology, The analog of the visuals reflected in the mind from the objects sensory organs perceived, dream. 4. Psychology, The objects and events that are perceived by the senses and which appear

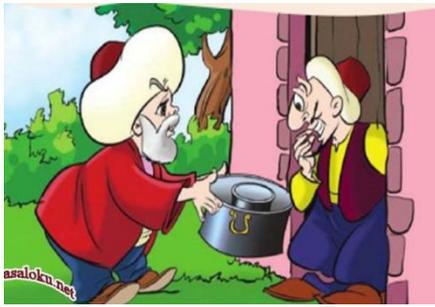


Figure 1. The boiler has given birth



Figure 2. The boiler has given birth

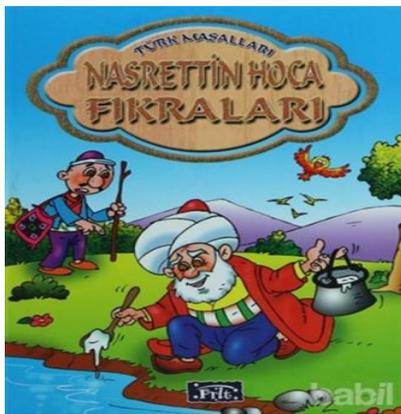


Figure 3. Fermenting the lake (what if it happens)



Figure 4. Fermenting the lake (what if it happens!)

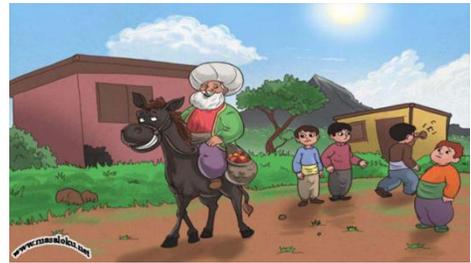


Figure 6. The person who gives the Money plays the whistle

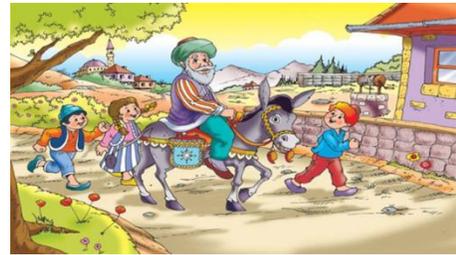


Figure 7. Novice Songbird

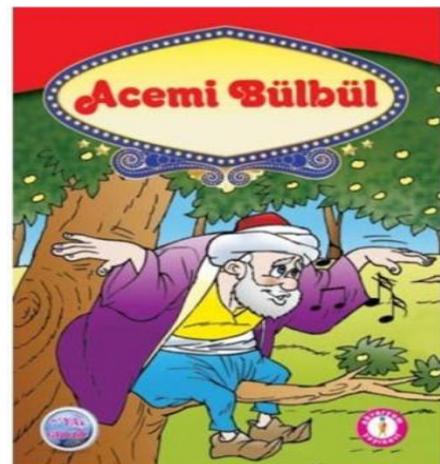


Figure 8. Novice Songbird

in consciousness without a stimulus, dream (2018).

The word image, which means the object, event, visual that appears in consciousness with or without a stimulus. The meaning in the first article of the dictionary is the mental image and the meaning in the third item is the sensory image. Thinking with images and designing images is one of the oldest intellectual processes of mankind. Sensing plays an important role in the perception of the work of art. The detected object is registered as an image to the brain (Bayav, 2009).

The first materials obtained through the senses are the images. The image appears first in the eye. This is called a retinal image. Some of these images then go to memory

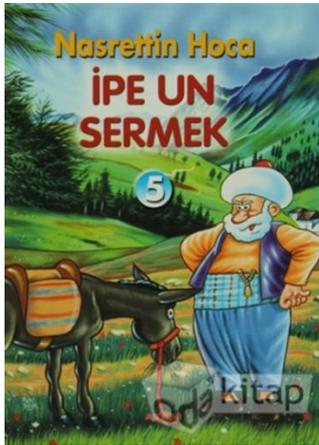


Figure 9. Dodge the column

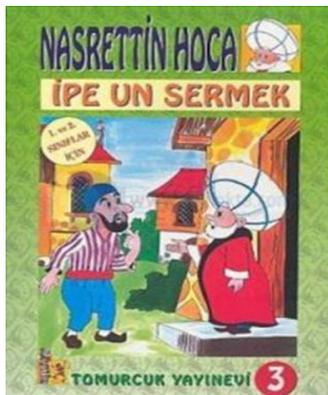


Figure 10. Dodge the column



Figure 11. Getting reverse on the donkey

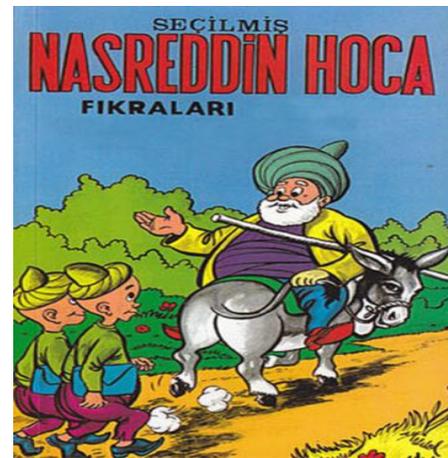


Figure 12. Getting reverse on the donkey

stores to be remembered later. These are memory images. There are also live or non-erasable images. These are stored as they are. Live images are stored in the mind for a long time (Kırıçoğlu, 2002).

The act of remembering an object at the second time occurs as a result of imaginative connotations. We can say that this is the most important indicator of storing a person's image, which we saw for the first time in our memory. Symbolization helps us to remember.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This section includes explanations for the design of the study, the study group, the collection of data, the data collection time and the analysis of the data.

### Significance of the study

This research is of great importance because it reflects the ability of messages that are intended to be given with visual images to be frequently repeated in the notorious

anecdotes of Nasreddin Hodja, and the importance of image in visual expression.

### The main question of the research and sub-questions

The main question that this research tried to answer is: 'What are the most common visual images used in Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes? And what kind of messages were attempted to be given with these visual images?'

### Research Model

This research is a descriptive study based on analysis of the most commonly used visual images in Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes. The data obtained were summarized and interpreted according to the predetermined themes (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2003). In this study, Document Analysis method, which is a qualitative research technique, was used. This is a method that analyzes written materials containing information about fact or facts that are intended



Figure 13. I was already getting off



Figure 14. I was already getting off

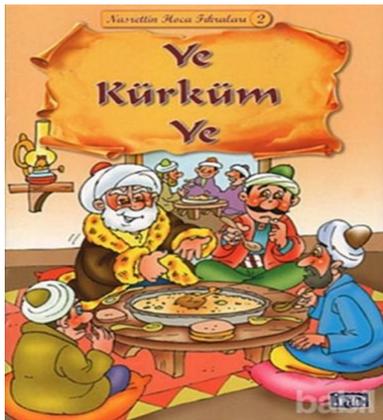


Figure 15. Eat My Fur Eat

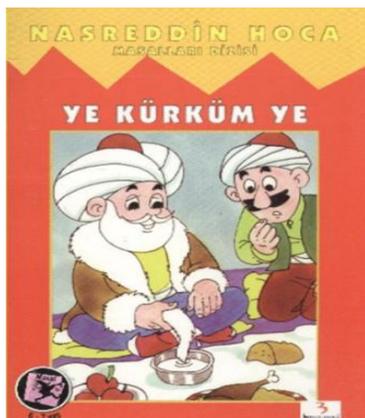


Figure 16. Eat My Fur Eat



Figure 17. If this is a cat, where is the meat

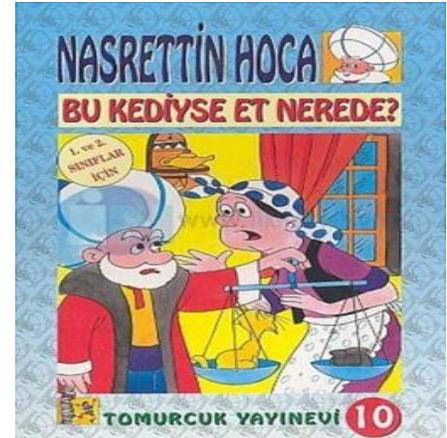


Figure 18. If this is a cat, where is the meat?

to be investigated. The research is limited to the most commonly used images which are quilted turban, rosary, caftan, sandal and donkey in anecdotes.

### Research Documents

In this study, approximately two hundred anecdote visuals were examined (appendix, and the five most frequently repeated images, which are quilted turban, caftan, white beard and mustache, rosary and donkey, were selected. In addition, the study was limited with the most well-known 10 anecdotes and 2 important visual samples evaluated from each anecdote.

### Data Collecting Tools

In this study, samples selected from the most prominent anecdotes were evaluated with the most commonly used visual images. The suitability of the visual images to the content of the anecdotes, how much of Hodja's personality is reflected and how it is relevant to the messages, and the ability to reflect the subject in accordance with the purpose were evaluated and interpreted.

### Data Analysis

Content analysis method was used for data analysis. The

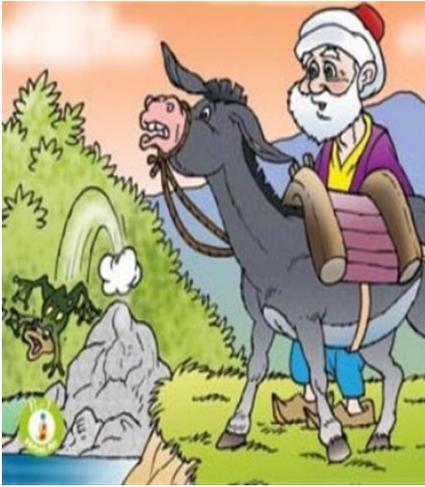


Figure 19. Lake bird

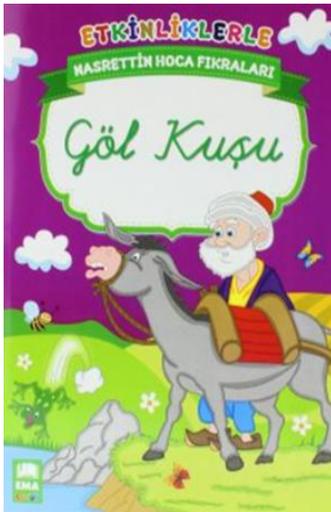


Figure 20. Lake bird

purpose of content analysis was to reach the concepts and relations that can explain the collected data. The data summarized in the descriptive analysis were subjected to a deeper process in the content analysis and the concepts and themes that cannot be recognized by a descriptive approach can be discovered by this analysis. The data gathered for this purpose should be conceptualized first, then organized in a logical manner according to the resulting concepts and accordingly, the themes explaining the data should be determined (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2003).

## FINDINGS AND EXPLANATION

The most important visual image that we encountered in Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes was the quilted turban of the Hodja. It was present in almost all of his images, it is an

inseparable part of Hodja and almost became a symbol for him. His white beard and mustache, caftan on him, his dress in it (usually white), a belt on his belly, a shalwar on the bottom, sandal-like shoes on the feet, and the rosary in his hand are the other visual images that we encountered mostly. He was also portrayed as a little plump and bellied. Hodja and all the figures around him were depicted as they wearing the clothes of the period they were living. Common visual images included a quilted turban, a shalwar, a belt, a sandal and a dress like entari.

He was a scholar and had a wise personality. His father was an imam, he received a good madrasa education. Nasreddin Hodja was an imam, mufti, cafi and teacher. Throughout the visuals, this is illustrated by the great white quilted turban and the long, wide caftan. The size of the quilted turban indicates that he was a highly educated, scholarly personality. The color of the quilted turban is white symbolizing purity and creates a more reliable image. The long and glamorous caftan also emphasizes its wise, scholarly, religious and promising personality. The quilted turban is also present in almost all other characters. However, no characters were symbolized with a greater quilted turban than the Hodja's. The Hodja is portrayed with the great white quilted turban, while the others are displayed in small white ones or in most children in the form of colored little hats or fez like hats. Hodja's caftan is depicted more clearly and longer than others in all the images.

According to our culture, white beard and mustache indicates qualities such as wisdom and the ability to lead in the right path. He was visited for consultation, was a wise person and was visually illustrated as a highlight. The images of Hodja are quite plump-bellied and slightly larger compared to other figures and are in the focal point of the images. His bellied and plump demonstration show him as more imposing and as a more dominating character. At the same time, it gives a cute caring attitude.

The donkey is pictured as an inseparable part of Hodja, rather than as an animal. The donkey was portrayed as his closest friend and confidant. In some images the donkey was shown in a humorous way with characteristics such as laughing, getting angry, wondering which belong to humans. Traveling everywhere with the donkey caused it to be the subject of visual in many stories. Hodja cannot be separated from his donkey, it is his vehicle, actually a figure of satire and ridicule. It can be said that there is no place for a horse in the humorous products created by the people of Anatolia. The donkey is the most common symbol of suffering, poverty, beating, and hunger. In the visuals of high palace people, the donkey is not found, whereas the horse holds a large place. In this regard, another contradiction is shown, in the joke laughter element and the satire element is brought side by side. An example of this phenomena is represented in one of the anecdotes as 'to the peasant who want his donkey, he says: "donkey is not at home," the peasant heard donkey's bray from the barn and he says "the donkey is here in the barn", and the Hodja

replies, "Do you believe in the word of the donkey or mine?"

## DISCUSSION RESULT AND SUGGESTIONS

From the period of infancy, children are very interested in multicolored and moving objects. These objects have always been attractive and make them enjoy. Colorful objects, moving objects, different sounds, toys, and animals are always interesting. Picture books are one of the most beautiful educational and entertaining tools that collect all of them together. In the literacy teaching phase of primary school students, story or anecdote books with visuals are the most indispensable. These are activities that entertain them while teaching. Visual images in anecdotes have a high power of expression and can be used more effectively in education.

To be integrated with the art, whether while presenting a work of art individually or participating as an audience, listener, or reader, it stimulates feelings and sensitivities that keeps all mental processes alive. (meh. 1998, Aktaran Akın, 478)

While illustrations were done in all of Nasreddin Hodja's anecdotes, they became explicitly clear images in our minds and were integrated with Nasreddin Hodja. All the pieces used in his clothing, the images used in the visuals of short stories, became a lesson and also a witty expression. These expressions reflected in the visuality, entertainment and at the same time suggesting a humor which was settled in our memory. The meaning attached to each image of Hodja, his charming and humorous personality, arose love, interest and curiosity even in small children who are illiterate.

The fact that the expression with visual images is quite effective and permanent will make a great contribution to the education of many students with the introduction of many different researches that can be done in this field. Therefore, with the use of cartoons and the most popular cartoon characters, which are developed with high technology today, in education, the power of images and visual expressions will attract the attention of students and researches on these visual expressions which will also contribute to their education. It is thought that the contribution of such studies to students who have difficulty in reading and writing skills, especially in special education and training schools, will be higher. By adding visual images in story and anecdotes books, and making the course books more visualized will contribute to the education of the students.

## Conflict of interests

The author declare that there is no conflict of interests.

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