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article

childhood epistemology in *alice's adventures in wonderland*:

an autonomous and experience-based field of knowledge

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abstract

This article examines *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* from the perspective of childhood epistemology, arguing that childhood knowledge should not be understood as deficient in relation to adult-centered rationality, but rather as an autonomous epistemic domain constituted through experience, uncertainty, and contextual interaction. The study conceptualizes childhood not merely as a pedagogical category, but as a distinct epistemic position that exists in structural tension with dominant adult knowledge regimes. Its point of departure lies in the limited number of studies within childhood research that directly problematize the epistemic status of childhood. The theoretical framework integrates Miranda Fricker's concept of epistemic injustice, John Dewey's theory of experiential learning, and Michel Foucault's analyses of knowledge–power relations. Methodologically, the study employs qualitative close reading and thematic analysis, focusing on the scenes of the Queen's Croquet Ground, Advice from a Caterpillar, and the Mad Tea Party. The findings demonstrate that adult epistemology in the text operates through arbitrary authority, normalizing judgments, and exclusionary discourses, thereby exposing its own internal inconsistencies. In contrast, Alice's

modes of knowing are shaped through trial and error, embodied experience, and the suspension of fixed meaning. The article positions *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as a critical epistemological space in which alternative forms of knowledge associated with childhood are literarily constructed, contributing to interdisciplinary debates in childhood studies, literary theory, and philosophy of knowledge.

keywords: childhood; epistemology; power relations; literary analysis; experiential learning.

epistemología de la infancia en *las aventuras de alicia en el país de las maravillas*: un campo de conocimiento autónomo y basado en la experiencia

resumen

Este artículo examina Las aventuras de Alicia en el país de las maravillas desde la perspectiva de la epistemología de la infancia, argumentando que el conocimiento infantil no debe entenderse como deficiente en relación con la racionalidad adultocéntrica, sino como un dominio epistémico autónomo constituido por la experiencia, la incertidumbre y la interacción contextual. El estudio conceptualiza la infancia no solo como una categoría pedagógica, sino como una posición epistémica distinta que existe en tensión estructural con los regímenes dominantes de conocimiento adulto. Su punto de partida reside en el limitado número de estudios dentro de la investigación sobre la infancia que problematizan directamente su estatus epistémico. El marco teórico integra el concepto de injusticia epistémica de Miranda Fricker, la teoría del aprendizaje experiencial de John Dewey y los análisis de Michel Foucault sobre las relaciones conocimiento-poder. Metodológicamente, el estudio emplea la lectura atenta cualitativa y el análisis temático, centrándose en las escenas del Campo de Cróquet de la Reina, Los consejos de una oruga y La fiesta del té. Los hallazgos

demuestran que la epistemología adulta en el texto opera mediante la autoridad arbitraria, juicios normalizadores y discursos excluyentes, exponiendo así sus propias inconsistencias internas. En contraste, los modos de conocimiento de Alicia se configuran mediante ensayo y error, la experiencia encarnada y la suspensión de un significado fijo. El artículo posiciona Las aventuras de Alicia en el país de las maravillas como un espacio epistemológico crítico en el que se construyen literariamente formas alternativas de conocimiento asociadas con la infancia, contribuyendo así a los debates interdisciplinarios en los estudios de la infancia, la teoría literaria y la filosofía del conocimiento.

palavras-clave: infancia; epistemología; relaciones de poder; análisis literario; aprendizaje experiencial.

epistemologia da infância em *as aventuras de alice no país das maravilhas*: um campo de conhecimento autónomo e baseado na experiência

resumo

Este artigo analisa *As Aventuras de Alice no País das Maravilhas* sob a perspectiva da epistemologia da infância, argumentando que o conhecimento infantil não deve ser entendido como uma forma deficiente ou incompleta de saber em relação à racionalidade adultocêntrica. Pelo contrário, constitui um campo epistêmico autônomo construído através da experiência, da incerteza e da interação contextual. O estudo conceitua a infância não apenas como uma categoria pedagógica, mas como uma posição epistêmica distinta que existe em tensão estrutural com os regimes dominantes do conhecimento adulto. O ponto de partida é o número limitado de estudos referentes à infância que problematizam diretamente seu status epistêmico. O referencial teórico integra o conceito de injustiça epistêmica de Miranda Fricker, a teoria da aprendizagem por experiência de John Dewey e as análises de Michel Foucault sobre as relações de

conhecimento-poder. Metodologicamente, o estudo emprega a leitura atenta qualitativa e a análise temática, com foco nas cenas do Campo de Croquet da Rainha, Conselhos de uma Lagarta e da Festa do Chá. Os resultados demonstram que a epistemologia adulta no texto opera através de uma autoridade arbitrária, normalizando julgamentos e discursos excludentes e, portanto, expondo suas próprias inconsistências internas. Em contraste, os modos de conhecimento de Alice se fazem através de tentativa e erro, de experiências encarnadas e da suspensão de um significado fixo. O artigo posiciona *Alice no País das Maravilhas* como um espaço epistemológico crítico onde são literariamente construídas formas alternativas de conhecimento associadas à infância, contribuindo, assim, para os debates interdisciplinares nos estudos da infância, na teoria literária e na filosofia do conhecimento.

palavras-chave: infância; epistemologia; relações de poder; análise literária; aprendizagem experiencial.

childhood epistemology in alice's adventures in wonderland: an autonomous and experience-based field of knowledge

> "Who in the world am I? Ah, that's the great puzzle!"
> Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*

introduction

Childhood has often been regarded within traditional epistemology as a passive receiver of knowledge or as a stage defined by cognitive lack. Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland constitutes one of the rare literary texts in which the child subject's knowledge production is systematically delegitimized, while adult rationality is represented as an arbitrary and inconsistent practice of power. For this reason, the text provides a particularly productive analytical ground for discussing childhood epistemology. However, contemporary studies challenge this reductionist view by emphasizing children as autonomous producers of knowledge. In this context, Matthews (1994) argues that children possess a philosophical sense of wonder and conceptual flexibility that adults often lack, thereby defending the philosophical competence of childhood; Fricker (2007), on the other hand, defines the invalidation of children's testimonies due to social prejudices as a problem of epistemic injustice. Drawing on Matthews's attribution of philosophical potential to children together with Fricker's theory of epistemic injustice, this article examines how Alice's Adventures in Wonderland constructs an autonomous epistemic mechanism against adult-centered knowledge authority. Within this framework, the work is approached not merely as a thematic children's narrative but as a distinctive epistemological space in which conflicts between knowledge regimes are literarily structured.

Children's literature has long been evaluated as a genre serving pedagogical purposes, expected to educate the child and to teach correct behavioral patterns. Within this approach, the child is positioned not as a subject who produces knowledge but as a passive recipient to whom knowledge is transmitted (Jenks, 2005; James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998).

Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, first published in 1865, is among the texts that challenge this established understanding. Although the work appears on the surface as a fairy tale woven with absurd events and illogical dialogues, its deeper structure contains a strong critique of knowledge, authority, and meaning production. Alice's constantly questioning attitude, her effort to understand, and her learning through experience contrast sharply with the arbitrary, inconsistent, and contradictory discourses of the adult authorities in Wonderland. This tension renders the text epistemologically remarkable (Carroll, 2017, Chapter II: The Pool of Tears).

This study approaches Alice's Adventures in Wonderland within the context of childhood epistemology and seeks to answer the following central question: How does the text construct childhood knowledge as an alternative, legitimate, and autonomous knowledge regime in relation to adult epistemology? Accordingly, the article aims to reveal the epistemic status of children's modes of knowledge production, the reasons why this knowledge is invalidated, and the ways in which the text deconstructs adult-centered conceptions of knowledge. This approach aligns with contemporary childhood studies that conceptualize childhood as a socially and cognitively autonomous category (Corsaro, 2018; Prout, 2005).

theoretical framework

childhood epistemology

For a long time, the literature on childhood studies remained under the dominance of developmental psychology and pedagogical approaches, positioning the child as an incomplete subject within a process of "becoming." This study conceptualizes the marginalization of childhood knowledge not merely as a matter of cognitive deficiency but as a multilayered process of epistemic exclusion operating through testimony, experience, and power relations. Although existing sociological approaches treat childhood as a social construction, there is a noticeable lack of studies that directly problematize the epistemic status of childhood knowledge and its conflict with adult-centered regimes of rationality. Departing from the dominant paradigm that views childhood as a pedagogical transitional stage, this study seeks to define childhood as a domain of "being,"

characterized by its own logic, experience-based truths, and autonomous epistemic regime. In this respect, the article aims to fill a gap in the literature by offering an epistemological deconstruction through a literary text.

Within this framework, childhood knowledge is defined as an experience-based and autonomous epistemic field. In this study, "childhood epistemology" is treated as a theoretical framework that focuses not on how children learn knowledge (the pedagogical process), but on how knowledge is produced, legitimized, or structurally invalidated by adult authority through the child subject. This perspective conceptualizes childhood not simply as a developmental stage or a preparatory phase for adult epistemology, but as an autonomous epistemic position operating through distinctive forms of experience, uncertainty, and questioning (Piaget, 1952; Schapiro, 1999).

Although the existing literature in childhood studies frequently discusses childhood in terms of social agency, generational order, or cultural negotiation (Lee, 2001; Oswell, 2013), the epistemic status problem outlined above has not been addressed directly. This article defines childhood epistemology as a critical analytical field that renders visible the child's experience-based, contextual, and plural knowledge production in opposition to epistemic orders in which the validity of knowledge is determined by adult norms, authority figures, and regimes of rationality.

historical and sociological perspective

Childhood is a multidimensional category that varies according to historical, cultural, and social contexts and is constructed within social relations and power structures beyond a merely biological developmental stage (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Mayall, 2002). Within the international literature on childhood studies, it is widely accepted that childhood is not a natural or universal phenomenon but a socially constructed one (Prout, 2005; Corsaro, 2018).

This perspective, developed within the framework of the new sociology of childhood, centers on the positioning of childhood within a generational order (Alanen, 2009; Qvortrup, 2011). Relations between children and adults are shaped not only by age-based biological differences but also by structural inequalities produced in knowledge, authority, and decision-making processes. This

theoretical framework provides a critical ground for understanding why and how childhood knowledge is marginalized by adult-centered epistemologies (Burman, 2016; Spyrou, 2018).

In this context, the "adult rationality" that stands in opposition to childhood knowledge and marginalizes it should be defined not merely as an age-based biological category, but as a specific epistemic regime rooted in Victorian utilitarianism and the rigid positivism of the Enlightenment. This regime constructs knowledge as hierarchical, categorizable, linguistically absolute, and as a form of property serving instrumental utility. Meaning within this rationality is fixed through a predetermined system of social and logical rules. Accordingly, the authority represented by the adult figures in Wonderland functions as a normative apparatus of pressure that does not allow for ambiguity, bodily fluidity, or linguistic play. What Alice confronts is not simply the inconsistency of individual characters, but the rigid and linear epistemic order itself.

Distrust toward childhood knowledge constitutes a structural issue that limits children's epistemic agency rather than a merely methodological problem. When considered together with Fricker's (2007) theory of epistemic injustice, this approach offers a strong analytical framework for explaining the systematic invalidation of children's testimonies through adult norms such as rationality and coherence.

Although studies in the Turkish context function mainly as secondary analyses adapting these theoretical frameworks to local settings (Atatanır, 2022; Şirin, 2017), this study aims to analyze childhood epistemology through a literary text by grounding itself in international literature. While developmental psychology approaches in childhood studies often position children as passive subjects, critical approaches question this status quo (Burman, 2016). Moreover, children's capacities to produce knowledge within social and cultural contexts are increasingly made visible (Oswell, 2013).

This study conceptualizes childhood epistemology as an alternative, experience-based, and autonomous field of knowledge in relation to adult-centered epistemologies. The fundamental differences between childhood and adult epistemologies are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Comparative schema of childhood and adult epistemologies.

Category	Childhood epistemology	Adult epistemology
Knowledge base	Experience-based and contextual	Rule- and norm-based
Context	Situational and flexible	Universal and fixed
Inquiry	Questioning and creativity	Authority-based
Value of knowledge	Autonomous and contextual	Dependent on power
Learning orientation	Trial-and-error, process oriented	Deviations are treated as error
Perception of rrror	Errors seen as learning opportunities	Error is viewed as rule violation

Note. The table illustrates the differing epistemic logics of childhood epistemology in contrast to adult-centered epistemology (James, Jenks, & Prout, 1998; Prout, 2005). **Source:** Elaborated by the author.

The fundamental distinctions between these two epistemic approaches, which constitute the theoretical ground of the study, are presented in Table 1. This historical and sociological perspective provides a functional framework for understanding how childhood knowledge is constructed on a literary level in Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. In the text, Alice is not represented as a figure who passively internalizes ready-made knowledge patterns; rather, she appears as an epistemic subject who continuously questions, learns through experience, and confronts uncertainty (Carroll, 2017/1865). This representation makes visible an adult-centered and authority-based epistemological order, while simultaneously repositioning childhood knowledge as an autonomous, experience-based, and contextual field of knowledge (Dewey, 1938; Schapiro, 1999; Fricker, 2007).

method

This study is designed within a qualitative research framework and aims to examine how childhood epistemology is constructed through a literary text. In the study, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is analyzed by means of an interpretive and theoretical text analysis method within the context of childhood studies and epistemology literature. The nature of qualitative research, which allows an in-depth examination of meaning-making processes, aligns with the epistemological objectives of the present study (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2018).

research design

The study adopts a qualitative approach, employing qualitative text analysis and thematic analysis as its research design. In this context, close reading is used not only to interpret the aesthetic aspects of the text, but also to analyze the conceptions of knowledge constructed within the narrative and the hierarchies established between them. The qualitative approach is preferred because it enables the visibility of contextual, discursive, and experiential dimensions of meaning in literary texts. Since the main aim of the study is to "bring forth" the epistemic status of childhood within a narrative dominated by adult discourses, it is necessary to capture this epistemological inequality not through numerical data alone, but through in-depth interpretation and discourse analysis. For this reason, Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase Thematic Analysis is adopted, as it allows a cyclical interaction between text and theory. Given that the study seeks to examine how childhood epistemology is represented through a literary text, it prioritizes an in-depth and interpretive analysis rather than quantitative generalization.

data source

The data source of the study consists of Lewis Carroll's Alice's Adventures in Wonderland (Carroll, 2017/1865). The text is selected due to its intensive thematization of childhood knowledge in relation to questioning, uncertainty, and experience-based learning. The work presents childhood epistemology not merely within a pedagogical context, but as a narrative space that deconstructs adult-centered knowledge regimes.

purposive sampling and scene selection

Purposive sampling is employed in this study. This method is preferred as it allows the selection of data segments that are directly related to the research question, theoretically meaningful, and analytically rich (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In this framework, while the entire text is taken into consideration, the analysis focuses on specific scenes that intensively contain themes of knowledge production in childhood, questioning attitudes, conflict with authority, and learning through uncertainty. These scenes are selected because they function as narrative nodes in which the child subject's knowledge production is

systematically invalidated and adult-centered epistemic authority is constructed in its most visible and intense form.

Accordingly, the following sections are selected as analytical nodes and included in the sample:

- **chapter v: advice from a caterpillar**; for rendering visible the contextuality of knowledge, biopolitical control, and the immeasurability of experience-based learning through Alice's bodily and cognitive transformations,
- **chapter vii: a mad tea-party**; for representing the semantic inconsistency of adult discourse, hermeneutic (interpretive) injustice, and the collapse of authority-based knowledge claims at the linguistic level,
- **chapters viii, xi, and xii: the queen's croquet ground and the court scenes**; for revealing epistemic power mechanisms and the epistemic resistance that emerges against them through the arbitrary construction of judgment, punishment, and truth relations.

These scenes constitute the primary data set that enables the decoding of how childhood knowledge is positioned in relation to adult-centered epistemology.

data analysis and coding process

Data analysis follows the six-phase thematic analysis process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006): (1) familiarization with the data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) writing the report.

To enhance the credibility of the coding process, textual expressions are linked with direct quotations, and themes are generated based on recurring discursive patterns. For instance, the theme "Epistemological Inconsistency of Adult Authority" emerges through the combined coding of passages such as the Queen's statement "Sentence first—verdict afterwards." (Carroll, 2017, p. 104) together with scenes involving extra-textual or meaningless knowledge claims, such as the Hatter's unanswered riddle. These expressions are grouped under the same theme because they demonstrate that claims of coherence and rationality in adult figures' knowledge production are systematically suspended within the text. This approach ensures that themes are constructed not on researcher intuition, but on textual repetition, context, and discursive function.

Table 2. Thematic Analysis Process: Epistemological Inconsistency of Adult Authority.

Data segment (Quotation) / Translation	Initial Code	Developed category / Thematic cluster	Main theme
Queen: (Croquet game scene with the Queen – irrational commands)	Illogical judgment procedure	Arbitrary rule-setting by authority	Epistemological Inconsistency of Adult Authority
Hatter: "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?" (Tea party scene)	Unanswered / meaningless knowledge claim	Collapse of rational discourse	Epistemological Inconsistency of Adult Authority
Duchess: "And the moral of that is… 'Be what you would seem to be'—or, if you'd like it put more simply—'Never imagine yourself not to be otherwise than what it might appear to others that what you were or might have been was not otherwise than what you had been would have appeared to them to be otherwise.'" (Duchess's kitchen scene)	Meaningless / inconsistent aphorisms	Collapse of rational discourse	Epistemological Inconsistency of Adult Authority
Alice: "You don't know how to manage things at all." (Encounter with the Queen)	Ineffectiveness / illegitimacy of adult knowledge	Arbitrary rule-setting by authority	Epistemological Inconsistency of Adult Authority

Note. Table 2 exemplifies the process through which raw textual data (quotations) are first transformed into specific codes, then into conceptual categories, and finally into an overarching main theme. This hierarchical structure represents a concrete projection of the thematic analysis stages proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006), namely coding, category construction, and thematization. **Source:** Elaborated by the author.

validity and reliability

In qualitative research, validity and reliability (trustworthiness) are evaluated through the criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as proposed by Guba and Lincoln (1985). In order to enhance the academic robustness of the research findings, the present study followed the steps outlined below:

- **Credibility:** To ensure that the findings accurately represent the data source (Alice's Adventures in Wonderland), direct and extended textual quotations were included throughout the analysis (see Table 3). In addition, the themes derived from the data were continuously compared with the theoretical framework (epistemic injustice and sociology of childhood), thereby strengthening internal consistency.

- **Transferability:** To increase the potential applicability of the findings to similar contexts, purposive sampling was employed. The specific scenes selected (Advice from a Caterpillar, A Mad Tea-Party, The Queen's Croquet Ground) and the theoretical rationales underlying their selection were explained in detail, providing the reader with contextual depth.

- **Dependability:** To ensure that the analysis process was consistent and traceable, the coding stages were conducted in a stepwise and iterative manner. The resulting codes, themes, and interpretations were continuously reviewed through comparison with the theoretical framework. Conceptual ambiguities that emerged during coding were re-evaluated by returning to the text, and analytical coherence was maintained through this reflexive process. Divergences arising in the coding process were addressed through deliberation sessions among the researchers, during which the text was revisited and consensus on the codes was reached. Rather than relying on a numerical agreement coefficient, this qualitative negotiation process aimed to preserve the depth of analysis.

- **Confirmability:** To demonstrate that the findings are independent of researcher bias and supported by the data, a transparent code–theme matrix was constructed (see Table 2). Detailed reporting of all stages of the analysis ensured that the study remains open to external audit and verification.

ethical considerations

This study is a theoretical analysis based entirely on a published literary text and does not involve human participants. Therefore, ethical committee approval is not required. Nevertheless, all quotations were used in accordance with academic ethical principles and properly cited (APA, 2020).

findings

The findings presented in this section demonstrate how childhood knowledge in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is positioned against an

adult-centered epistemology. The text represents childhood knowledge not merely as a pedagogical transitional phase or a deficient cognitive stage, but as an autonomous field of knowledge grounded in experience, uncertainty, and questioning. The findings are presented along four main analytical axes identified through qualitative text analysis and thematic coding.

systematic invalidation of childhood knowledge

In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, the moments of confusion and hesitation displayed by the protagonist in the face of adult authorities, contrary to traditional readings, do not indicate cognitive insufficiency but rather the manifestation of active epistemic agency. What Matthews (1994) describes as "philosophical wonder" transforms Alice from a passive victim into an observer who problematizes the norms that the adult world accepts as "natural" and "fixed."

Instead of immediately surrendering to the absurdities she encounters, Alice exposes the contradiction between her own experiential data set and the fictional rationality imposed by adults. In this sense, Alice's "confusion" functions as an effect of estrangement that reveals the internal inconsistencies of authority disguised as rationality. Accordingly, the persistent attempts to silence Alice's voice throughout the text stem not from her lack of knowledge, but from the epistemic threat posed by this sharp and autonomous perspective, which exposes the fragility of the adult-centered knowledge regime. This agentic capacity demonstrates that Alice is not merely a subject who experiences events, but an epistemic actor capable of destabilizing the logical foundations of Wonderland.

The fundamental difficulty Alice faces in Wonderland is not only the rejection of her testimony, but also the absence of a shared conceptual reservoir (hermeneutical resource) through which her absurd experiences could be interpreted and communicated. This condition, defined by Fricker (2007) as "hermeneutical injustice," becomes concrete in the semantic gap that emerges when Alice is forced to articulate her experiences through the language of adults. By monopolizing language and meaning, adult authority renders Alice "voiceless," while Alice attempts to overcome this gap by constructing her own epistemic vocabulary through logical questioning and wonder.

Within the text, Alice's knowledge production is frequently labeled as meaningless, unnecessary, or erroneous by the adult figures she encounters. This illustrates that childhood knowledge is devalued not because of its content, but solely because it belongs to a child, thus exposing Alice to what Fricker (2007) terms "testimonial injustice." For instance, Alice's search for identity is evident in the early sections of the narrative. Upon entering Wonderland, Alice asks herself, "Who in the world am I?" (Carroll, 2017, p. 14). This question reveals Alice's subjective epistemic uncertainty, yet it receives no direct response from adult figures.

While following the White Rabbit, Alice hears him exclaim in haste, "Oh dear! Oh dear! I shall be late!" (Carroll, 2017, p. 3). This utterance does not respond to Alice's identity quest; instead, it reflects the adult world's obsession with time and priorities. At this point, Alice's ontological inquiry, crystallized in the question "Who am I?", collides with the wall of "functional speed" symbolized by the White Rabbit within the adult world. The Rabbit's constant anxiety and fixation on his watch demonstrate that adult epistemology prioritizes managing time and performance rather than engaging in existential meaning-making. For adults, knowledge is not a process of deep questioning, but a temporal instrument used to reach predetermined goals. This prioritization of "functional speed" over "ontological being" invalidates the child's meaning-making process from the outset. The White Rabbit's act of mistaking Alice for a servant and issuing commands further illustrates how the child's unique epistemic identity is objectified under adult bureaucratic concerns.

Similarly, in the scene of the Mad Tea-Party, Alice's logic-based suggestions are ignored. Alice directs the objection "But that's not logical!" (Carroll, 2017, p. 53) to the Hatter and the March Hare. Their reactions reveal how adult epistemology systematically disregards the child's experience- and logic-based contributions. These examples demonstrate that childhood knowledge is not positioned merely as a pedagogical transitional stage or a deficient cognitive phase, but as an autonomous, experience-based field of knowledge that is actively invalidated by adult-centered epistemology (James et al., 1998; Prout, 2005).

The responses Alice receives to her experiences and questions do not merely devalue her knowledge, but also expose the epistemological inconsistencies of adult authority. The White Rabbit and the characters at the Mad Tea-Party act according to their own agendas and conceptions of logic, while dismissing Alice's observations and reasoning. This situation highlights both the rigidity of adults' approach to knowledge and the contradictory status assigned to the child subject. Adult authority operates in a centralized manner in terms of access to and interpretation of knowledge; however, this centralization masks its own logical inconsistencies while systematically marginalizing childhood knowledge.

In Wonderland, adult characters hold the authority to produce knowledge, to judge, and to punish, yet the rules upon which this authority rests are neither stable nor grounded in a rational epistemic foundation. Adult authority functions not through knowledge-based legitimacy, but through status and power relations. Within this framework, the analysis deepens the arbitrary boundaries of adult epistemology and identifies the rupture points at which childhood knowledge is constructed as an autonomous field, focusing on the following scenes within the narrative structure:

- **Chapter VI: Pig and pepper (Body and biopolitical potential).** Alice's bodily transformations can be read as a continuation of the normalizing judgment mechanisms previously discussed in the Caterpillar scene. Alice's statement "I'm not myself anymore" represents an epistemic rupture emerging against the regulation of the body through fixed norms. The effects of bodily discipline and normalization processes on Alice's knowledge production are examined in detail in Section 4.3.

- **Chapter VII: A Mad tea-party (Focus on hermeneutical injustice).** The central analytical axis of this scene is the hermeneutical injustice experienced by Alice; linguistic chaos and temporal uncertainty function as instrumental elements that intensify and render this injustice visible. Alice's logic and observations are deliberately ignored by the Hatter and the March Hare. This scene constitutes the analytical core of Alice's hermeneutical injustice. By intentionally violating the

Gricean maxims of quantity, quality, and relevance defined by Paul Grice, the Hatter and the March Hare disable the informative function of language. This pushes Alice into a linguistic void in which rational meaning cannot be produced. Here, linguistic chaos and temporal crisis are not ends in themselves, but supporting mechanisms that deepen the interpretive gap created by the absence of a shared conceptual reservoir through which Alice's experience could be understood.

- **Chapter VIII: The queen's croquet ground (Sovereign power and bare violence).** Judgment, punishment, and truth relations are constructed arbitrarily, exposing the epistemic power mechanisms of adult authority. The Queen's insistence on "sentence first—verdict afterwards" represents, in Foucauldian terms, a form of classical sovereign power masked by rationality. Unlike disciplinary power, here Alice initiates an epistemic rebellion that exposes bare violence devoid of legal procedure and rational grounding.

These scenes are treated as analytical nodes that render visible the marginalization of childhood knowledge in relation to adult-centered epistemology and the epistemic power relations at work. The epistemic power mechanisms and forms of injustice encountered by Alice in her processes of knowledge production are presented in detail in Table 3.

Table 3. Classification of epistemic injustice and power mechanisms in alice's adventures in wonderland.

Analytical level	Type / Subtype	Scene and epistemic context
Testimonial injustice	Identity Prejudice	**Court scene:** Alice's testimony and rational statements are systematically devalued by adult authorities solely due to her status as a child.
Hermeneutical injustice	Gap in collective conceptual resources	**Mad tea-party:** Alice is excluded from a shared pool of meaning needed to interpret her experiences; time and language are controlled by adults in ways that block Alice's rational sense-making.
Epistemic objectification	Deprivation of subjective agency	**Caterpillar Scene:** Alice is positioned not as a "knowing subject" but as an object under constant interrogation and biopolitical regulation.
Sovereign Power	Suspension of Legal Procedure	**The Queen's Croquet Ground:** Bare violence and absolute authority are displayed through the principle of "sentence first—verdict afterwards," replacing rational judgment.

The epistemic regime of pressure established by adult authority in the text can be examined on a more systematic level. As demonstrated in the classification presented in Table 3, the injustices experienced by Alice do not remain confined to the discursive level; rather, they extend across a broad spectrum of power mechanisms, ranging from the rejection of testimony to bodily objectification. This epistemological inconsistency becomes particularly visible at the textual level through the discursive and narrative structures concentrated in the scene of the Queen's Croquet Ground.

epistemic authority and the suspension of meaning: a close reading of the court scene in alice's adventures in wonderland

One of the most striking scenes in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, the Queen's Croquet Ground episode, clearly reveals how adult-centered epistemology operates independently of meaning, evidence, and logical sequence. The Queen's well-known statement constitutes one of the nodal points intensifying the text's epistemological critique: "Sentence first—verdict afterwards." (Queen's Croquet Ground, Carroll, 2017). This utterance does not merely generate absurdity at the narrative level; it also renders visible, at the linguistic level, the functioning of adult epistemic authority as grounded in power rather than knowledge.

The reversal of the natural and rational sequence of judgment demonstrates that knowledge is constructed not through verification, but through a practice of punishment that is retrospectively legitimized. The transformation of "punishment" into the starting point of the epistemic process implies that knowledge ceases to be an investigated truth and instead becomes an instrument produced through the arbitrary discourse of authority. At this point, language shifts from a medium of meaning-making into a tool for maintaining power.

Alice's reactions in this scene clearly expose the opposition between childhood epistemology and adult epistemology. In response to the irrationality of the court order, Alice counters with simple yet persistent questions. These

questions suspend the epistemic framework that adult authority treats as natural and self-evident. Alice's objections implicitly articulate an epistemic demand that knowledge production should be grounded not in status, but in coherence and causality. Alice's final objection during the trial—"You're nothing but a pack of cards!" (Carroll, 2017, p. 104)—is not a mere outburst of anger, but a moment of epistemic rebellion that unmasks the hollow symbols of adult authority. The Queen's insistence on "sentence first," devoid of rational grounding, represents, in Foucauldian terms, sovereign power disguised by a mask of rationality. By removing this mask, Alice declares adult knowledge to be not absolute, but constructed and fictional. This moment can be read within the framework of testimonial injustice as defined by Fricker (2007): Alice's knowledge-based objections are devalued independently of their epistemic content, solely because they belong to a child subject.

This scene demonstrates that the child is not positioned merely as a recipient of knowledge; rather, the child is represented as a subject who questions the legitimacy of authority and suspends the epistemic framework itself.

The Queen's Croquet Ground scene also operates on a strong metaphorical level. The court, a symbol of law and rational judgment, is transformed in Carroll's narrative into a theatrical, arbitrary, and semantically collapsed space. The Queen's repetitive commands, exaggerated titles, and the caricaturization of legal discourse ironically deconstruct the adult epistemology's claim to seriousness. In this context, the text represents adult knowledge not as a practice that produces order and objectivity, but as a form of power that generates semantic noise and epistemic chaos.

The narrator constructs this critique not through explicit didactic judgment, but through a distant and ironic mode of presentation. Adult figures' discourses are not openly condemned by the narrator; instead, their internal inconsistencies are exposed within the narrative context itself. This narrative strategy aligns the reader's epistemic position with Alice's and elevates the child's perspective to a privileged interpretive stance. Thus, childhood perception is coded not as an incomplete or immature cognitive stage, but as an epistemic orientation more attuned to meaning-making.

This close reading demonstrates that Alice's Adventures in Wonderland does not portray childhood merely as a figure confused by the chaos of the adult world; on the contrary, it constructs a critical subject capable of exposing the fragility of adult-centered epistemological structures. Particularly through the Queen's Croquet Ground scene, the text crystallizes not the deficiency of childhood knowledge, but the inconsistency of adult rationality. In this way, the child subject moves beyond a passive recipient of judgment mechanisms and actively intervenes in meaning-production processes through demands for coherence and causality.

bodily experience and epistemic uncertainty: chapter v – advice from a caterpillar

The Advice from a Caterpillar scene renders visible that knowledge in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is constructed not as a fixed, universal, adult-centered structure, but as a temporary formation emerging through bodily experience and contextual interaction. The Caterpillar's question, "Who are you?", functions not merely as an inquiry into identity, but as a point at which the subject's epistemic position is suspended. Alice's inability to provide a definitive answer signals not ignorance, but the processual and unstable nature of knowledge itself.

Alice's constantly changing bodily size can be associated with power relations operating through bodily norms within the framework of Foucault's (1977) concept of biopolitics. In contrast to the adult world's tendency to define the child's body within fixed standards of "normality" and "form," Alice's uncontrolled growth and shrinking expose the instability of such norms. The Caterpillar's criticism of Alice's height and Alice's defense of her bodily state open a space in which bodily norms are questioned by the child subject. Carroll constructs this scene not as a didactic moment of learning, but as a narrative structure that reveals the unstable and temporary nature of knowledge through bodily experience.

bodily transformation and learning

The different effects produced by the two sides of the mushroom demonstrate that knowledge does not yield linear or predictable outcomes. Alice's

learning of which part to eat solely through bodily feedback foregrounds a trial-and-error, experience-based learning process. This dynamic renders visible the limits of the linear knowledge model dominant in adult epistemology.

linguistic and narrative strategy

The Caterpillar's short, fragmented speech, which leaves Alice alone with her own answers, weakens the traditional adult–child hierarchy of the "knowledge-transmitting authority." This discursive structure, which offers no ready-made knowledge, implies that knowledge may be constructed by the subject through uncertainty and questioning. Such narrative indeterminacy positions Alice not as a passive recipient of information, but as an active participant in meaning production.

norms and conformity

Alice's search for the "right size" symbolizes the regulatory effects of adult-centered norms on the child's body. However, the unpredictable effects of the mushroom demonstrate that these norms are contextual rather than universal and fixed. Alice's acceptance of bodily variability reveals knowledge not as a static goal, but as an experience shaped within process.

linguistic absurdity and suspended time: a mad tea-party

temporal structure and epistemic environment

In the tea-party scene, linear temporality is suspended. The clocks' constant indication of six o'clock constitutes a deliberate deconstruction of chronological order, a foundational pillar of adult epistemology. This shifts Alice's meaning-making process onto a chaotic and uncertain ground.

linguistic rupture and the search for meaning

Dialogues in this scene exhibit structures that violate Gricean principles of cooperation. Unanswered questions and irrelevant responses challenge language's capacity to produce epistemic authority. The linguistic chaos of the tea-party scene is not merely a logical game; it constitutes a space of resistance against the regulatory and classificatory power of adult language. This scene marks a structural rupture in which Carroll deliberately suspends language's

meaning-making function, transforming literary narrative into an epistemological experimental field. The Hatter's and March Hare's systematic violation of Alice's linguistic norms (Gricean cooperative principles) forces Alice to abandon conventional patterns of "proper speech" and "rational communication."

At this point, Alice's confusion directly corresponds to the concept of hermeneutical injustice discussed by Fricker (2007). The existing social language (adult language) does not allow Alice to interpret her chaotic yet real experience, because the linguistic regime grounded in adult epistemology is built upon assumptions of stability, rationality, and linear time. When Alice's bodily transformations and experiences of nonsense exceed this regime, the child subject is deprived of the conceptual resources needed to name and explain her experience. For instance, Alice's statement "I don't know who I am" is labeled as a "cognitive deficiency" within the adult paradigm of fixed identity. Yet the core problem lies not in Alice's cognition, but in the adult language's failure to provide a vocabulary for fluid and multiple identities. This creates a structural conceptual gap that prevents Alice from articulating her experience both to herself and to others.

Nevertheless, by constructing her own "nonsensical" yet internally coherent logic within this absurdity, Alice emerges as an autonomous epistemic actor who refuses confinement within adult linguistic regimes. Her effort to establish logical connections constitutes a critical stance toward the normative use of language.

the strategy of childhood epistemology

In this chaotic environment, Alice does not merely adapt; she renders nonsense visible and positions herself as a questioning subject. This underscores the representation of childhood knowledge as not passive, but as a critical and active epistemic force.

The scenes of Advice from a Caterpillar, A Mad Tea-Party, and The Queen's Croquet Ground examined above collectively demonstrate how adult-centered epistemological order is dismantled at different levels within Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. The arbitrariness of epistemic authority in the court scene, the construction of knowledge through bodily experience in the Caterpillar scene, and the loss of semantic function in language and temporality in the tea-party scene

reveal knowledge as a fragile and contextual process rather than a fixed, linear, and hierarchical structure. Through the linguistic and temporal ruptures encountered by Alice, these scenes render visible the limits of adult-centered regimes of meaning. From this point forward, the next section will address the experience-based and processual nature of childhood epistemology more systematically, focusing on the dynamics of learning, transformation, and subject formation established throughout the text.

The epistemological functions of these three scenes are comparatively summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Scene-Based Comparison of the Epistemological Functions of Childhood in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland.

Scene	Epistemological focus	Linguistic / Narrative Element	Problem of adult epistemology	Position of childhood epistemology
The queen's croquet ground	Epistemic authority and judgment	Syntactic inversion ("Sentence first—verdict afterwards"), ironic narrator	Authority-based, arbitrary knowledge production detached from verification	Critical subject demanding coherence and causality
Advice from a caterpillar	Bodily experience and uncertainty	Metaphor (mushroom), fragmented dialogue, experience-based narration	Expectation of fixed and predictable knowledge	Active epistemic actor learning through trial-and-error
A mad tea-party	Linguistic absurdity and temporality	Disrupted dialogue, repetition, suspended time	Assumption of linear time and rational language	Questioning subject resisting meaninglessness

Note. Table 4 illustrates how childhood epistemology in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland is constructed through varying narrative strategies across different scenes. While the Queen's Croquet Ground problematizes epistemic authority, the Advice from a Caterpillar scene foregrounds bodily experience, and the Mad Tea-Party destabilizes language and temporality. Together, these scenes position childhood knowledge as an experience-based, processual, and critical epistemic regime. **Source:** Elaborated by the author.

experience-based knowledge production and the processual nature of learning

This discussion section integrates the findings primarily through Fricker's framework of epistemic injustice. The scenes of Advice from a Caterpillar, A Mad Tea-Party, and The Queen's Croquet Ground examined above demonstrate that, in Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, knowledge does not operate as a fixed,

pre-determined, and authority-centered structure. Rather, it functions as a process continuously reconstructed through experience, bodily encounters, and linguistic interaction. The rules, criteria, and meaning frameworks Alice encounters in these scenes do not provide a stable epistemic ground; instead, they constitute temporary structures that compel the subject to produce knowledge through trial, error, and adaptation. By suspending adult-centered rational knowledge, Carroll's narrative constructs childhood experience as an experience-based epistemological field defined by openness to error, uncertainty, and transformation.

Within this context, learning is not presented as a linear progression or a goal-oriented acquisition process. Instead, it is structured as a fragmented experiential field characterized by temporal ruptures, repetitions, and sudden directional shifts. Particularly in the tea-party scene, the "frozen" state of time implies that knowledge is produced not through chronological accumulation, but through momentary encounters and contextual awareness. Alice's constantly shifting position reveals that accessing knowledge requires not a stable method, but forms of perception and action that are continuously recalibrated in relation to situational demands.

This processuality emerges as a defining feature that distinguishes childhood epistemology from adult-centered regimes of rationality. While knowledge in the adult world is typically legitimized through predefined criteria and normative frameworks, in Carroll's text knowledge is tested within experience itself and often loses its validity in the process. Each new situation Alice encounters suspends the absoluteness of prior knowledge. Consequently, childhood knowledge is represented not as a completed system, but as an epistemic practice open to constant revision and deeply entangled with contingency.

When this epistemic practice collides with the rationality mask imposed by adult authority, the true face of power is revealed. For instance, the Queen's insistence on "sentence first—verdict afterwards" represents, in Foucauldian terms, classical sovereign power disguised as rationality. Whereas modern disciplinary power governs indirectly through normalization and correction of the body, the sovereign power embodied by the Queen operates through the direct suspension of legal procedure and immediate punishment. At this point, Alice

refuses to become the "docile body" of disciplinary power and initiates an epistemic rebellion that exposes the sovereign's rationally ungrounded bare violence.

This experience-based and processual understanding of knowledge aligns with John Dewey's conception of learning as a dynamic process shaped through the subject's interactions with the environment rather than static transmission of information. According to Dewey (1938), experience is not merely a sum of events, but a learning field that gains meaning through relations of continuity established among those events. In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, the situations Alice encounters do not offer pedagogically structured experiences in Dewey's sense; yet precisely this disorder makes visible that learning is grounded not in predetermined outcomes, but in awareness emerging through experience. Thus, Carroll's narrative positions childhood knowledge not as a result-oriented acquisition process, but as an open-ended epistemological practice that transforms alongside experience itself. In this respect, the narrative reveals that literary form is not merely representational, but constitutive of how knowledge is produced.

Alice learns knowledge directly through experience; the processes of trial-and-error and adaptation reveal the dynamic nature of knowledge (Dewey, 1938). This processuality establishes an epistemic logic opposed to the fixed rules and universal rationality demanded by adult-centered epistemology. Error, experimentation, and adjustment demonstrate that knowledge is not a static structure determined by authority, but a contextual formation continuously reconstructed.

Alice's labyrinthine experiences and her uncertainty about which direction to take (Carroll, 2017, pp. 35–42) enable her to develop new strategies based on internal reasoning and experiential feedback rather than reliance on external authority. This dynamic, crystallized in the Advice from a Caterpillar scene, reaches its peak when Alice experiments with different sides of the mushroom to control her height. Here, knowledge is represented not as passive memorization of rules imposed by adults, but as action-oriented wisdom dynamically transformed through context, body, and experience. While adult knowledge is typically legitimized through predefined criteria and normative frameworks, in Carroll's

text knowledge is tested within the child subject's own experience and frequently reconstructed in the process.

uncertainty, multiplicity, and epistemic maturity

The text approaches uncertainty not as a deficiency, but as a natural and mature dimension of childhood knowledge. Rather than seeking singular and definitive answers, Alice evaluates situations from multiple perspectives and learns to explore alternative pathways. For instance, while following the rabbit hole and encountering various doors in the Down the Rabbit-Hole chapter (Carroll, 2017, p. 3), Alice considers different possibilities before deciding which path to take. When confronted with unexpected or illogical situations, such as in the Pool of Tears chapter (Carroll, 2017, p. 23), she employs trial-and-error strategies to find her own solutions. This approach positions childhood knowledge around openness, flexibility, and plural perspectives, rendering visible the limits of adult-centered conceptions of certainty. Carroll's narrative foregrounds children's experience-based learning processes and their capacities to cope with uncertainty, thereby showing both the limitations of adult rationality and the construction of an autonomous epistemic domain grounded in the child's perspective.

gap in the literature and the position of the study

Existing studies in children's literature and childhood research have predominantly approached Alice's Adventures in Wonderland within the frameworks of linguistic play, logical paradoxes, or fantasy narrative. Such studies tend to position Alice as a pedagogical or symbolic figure, rather than systematically analyzing the child's knowledge production processes as those of an epistemic agent.

This study conceptualizes Alice as an epistemic agent and frames childhood knowledge as an autonomous, experience-based field of knowledge. While philosophical studies of childhood that take children's intellectual capacities seriously (Matthews, 1994; Schapiro, 1999) often address children as subjects of normative debate, the present study renders childhood knowledge visible at textual and discursive levels through epistemic power relations.

The findings reveal Alice's modes of knowledge production thematically and demonstrate the positioning of childhood knowledge in relation to adult-centered epistemology. The main themes identified through the thematic coding process are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Childhood epistemology in alice's adventures in wonderland: thematic coding.

Theme	Sub-theme / Sample text	Source
Systematic invalidation	Alice: "Who am I?"	Carroll, 2017/1865, Chapter I, down the rabbit-hole
Inconsistency of adult authority	Queen: "Sentence first—verdict afterwards."	Carroll, 2017/1865, Chapter VIII, the queen's croquet ground
Inconsistency of adult authority	Hatter: "Why is a raven like a writing-desk?"	Carroll, 2017/1865, Chapter VII, A mad tea-party
Experience-based knowledge production	Alice: "I'm growing bigger and smaller again!"	Carroll, 2017/1865, Chapter V, advice from a caterpillar
Uncertainty and epistemic maturity	Alice: "I can't decide!"	Carroll, 2017/1865, Chapter V, advice from a caterpillar

Note. Quotations are based on the 2017 Turkish translation published by İş Bankası Kültür Yayınları. Since page numbers may vary across editions, references are provided using scene or chapter titles. The table illustrates how Alice's knowledge production, within the framework of childhood epistemology, is positioned against adult authority through experience- and uncertainty-based processes (Fricker, 2007; Dewey, 1938). **Source:** Elaborated by the author.

discussion

This study approaches Alice's Adventures in Wonderland within the framework of childhood epistemology and argues that childhood knowledge cannot be positioned as a deficient, temporary, or incomplete form of knowledge in relation to adult-centered rationality. Rather, it constitutes a distinct epistemic field constructed through experience, uncertainty, and contextual interaction. In this respect, the article intersects with interdisciplinary approaches that treat literary texts not merely at the level of representation, but as sites where knowledge, power, and subjectivity are produced. When Fricker's (2007) theory of epistemic injustice, Dewey's (1938) experience-based learning model, and Foucault's (1977) analyses of knowledge–power relations are considered together, Carroll's narrative emerges as framing child–adult knowledge relations not as a pedagogical issue alone, but as a directly epistemological problem field.

The findings demonstrate that adult figures systematically invalidate Alice's knowledge production and continuously question her epistemic credibility. The labeling of Alice's questions as "meaningless," "inappropriate," or "ill-timed" points to a structural mechanism of suspicion that aligns with what Fricker (2007) defines as testimonial injustice. This reveals that children are not recognized solely as learners, but are denied recognition as producers of knowledge, with their epistemic capacities constrained within intergenerational power relations. In this way, the literary narrative renders visible the applicability of epistemic injustice theory within adult–child relations on a concrete analytical level.

This pattern becomes even more pronounced when considered alongside Foucault's (1977) analyses of knowledge–power relations. In Wonderland, adult figures' claims to knowledge are legitimized not through rational coherence, but through status and authority. Characters such as the Queen and the Duchess deploy knowledge not as an open-ended process of inquiry, but as a discursive instrument that produces obedience. Within this framework, the text exposes adult epistemology not as a neutral regime of rationality, but as a historical and contextual structure operating within power relations.

A significant finding of the study is that these power relations operate not only at the discursive level, but also through bodily norms. Alice's constantly changing bodily experience can be read, within Foucault's concept of biopolitics, as a field in which the child's body is subjected to normalizing judgments. The adult world's expectations of fixed form, size, and logical consistency are repeatedly destabilized by Alice's experiences. This demonstrates that epistemic injustice is not merely cognitive in nature, but also bodily, as the child's capacity to know is evaluated through conformity to bodily norms.

Dewey's (1938) experience-based learning theory provides a productive framework for interpreting Alice's knowledge production. Alice generates knowledge not through ready-made rules or authority figures, but through trial-and-error, uncertainty, and bodily feedback. This process reveals learning as a contextual and processual phenomenon rather than a linear progression through predefined stages. In this sense, the narrative makes visible the limits of adult-centered, rule- and norm-based epistemology.

The findings also resonate with Matthews's (1994) arguments regarding children's philosophical inquiry capacities. Alice's confrontation with uncertainty and her resistance to the pressure for definitive answers demonstrate that the child can be positioned as an epistemic actor. Accordingly, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland can be read not merely as a thematic or pedagogical narrative, but as a literary text that constructs childhood experience as a critical field for interrogating the nature of knowledge itself.

Overall, this study demonstrates that childhood knowledge is not a deficient, temporary, or incomplete form of knowing in relation to adult-centered rationality, but rather a distinct epistemic field constructed through experience, uncertainty, and contextual interaction. The findings reveal that reading children's literature from the child's perspective offers new theoretical and methodological possibilities for interpretation and analysis.

conclusion

This study has examined Alice's Adventures in Wonderland from the perspective of childhood epistemology and demonstrated that childhood knowledge is not an incomplete or provisional form of knowledge when compared to adult-centered rationality. Instead, it constitutes an experience-based, processual, and contextual epistemic field. The epistemic obstacles Alice encounters reveal that childhood knowledge is not merely a pedagogical transitional stage, but a distinct mode of knowing shaped in tension with adult knowledge regimes. Close reading analyses show that, in Carroll's narrative, knowledge is constructed not through fixed rules or authority figures, but through uncertainty, bodily experience, and linguistic ruptures. Scenes such as the Queen's Croquet Ground, Advice from a Caterpillar, and A Mad Tea-Party illustrate that childhood experience is represented not as a passive learning process, but as an active and transformative ground of meaning production.

The findings demonstrate that literary narratives are not limited to thematic, aesthetic, or pedagogical readings, but also contain the potential to contribute to theoretical debates in epistemology. In this respect, the study offers a critical contribution to interdisciplinary dialogue between childhood studies,

literary theory, and philosophy of knowledge, positioning childhood epistemology at the center of children's literature research.

theoretical contributions

This study offers original contributions to the literature on childhood epistemology at three main levels.

First, it moves beyond approaches that treat childhood as a biological or purely pedagogical developmental stage, repositioning childhood as a historically, culturally, and epistemically legitimate field of knowledge. The analysis of Alice's Adventures in Wonderland demonstrates that childhood knowledge is not deficient in relation to adult knowledge, but operates according to a different epistemic logic, thus providing a critical intervention into developmental deficit discourses in childhood studies.

Second, by examining children's knowledge production through the lens of experience-based epistemology, the study shows that learning occurs not through transmission, but through uncertainty and inquiry. Alice's experience-based knowledge production establishes a theoretical parallel with Dewey's experiential learning framework while concretizing, at the literary level, approaches that foreground children's epistemic agency. This contributes directly to literature that treats children not merely as learners, but as meaning-producing epistemic actors.

Third, the study establishes an interdisciplinary connection between epistemic injustice theory and childhood studies. The systematic invalidation of Alice's knowledge production is analyzed within Fricker's framework of testimonial injustice, rendering visible, through a literary text, how and why children's epistemic credibility is questioned. This approach allows for the extension of epistemic injustice theory into the context of adult–child relations.

limitations

The study has several limitations. First, the analysis is conducted on a single literary text, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, which limits the generalizability of the findings. However, single-text analysis enables a detailed examination of the narrative complexity of childhood epistemology and allows for in-depth engagement with experience-based learning processes. The aim of the study is not

comparative generalization, but theoretical depth and original contribution through close reading.

Additionally, the analysis relies on qualitative textual interpretation and does not include empirical data on how historical or contemporary child readers experience the text. This limits the possibility of directly linking the textual construction of childhood knowledge with actual child experiences.

suggestions for future research

Future research may examine childhood epistemology and experience-based knowledge production comparatively across different literary genres, historical periods, or cultural contexts. In particular, modern and contemporary children's literature could be re-evaluated in light of the findings of this study to explore how childhood knowledge is positioned. Interdisciplinary studies that combine childhood epistemology with reader-response research may further illuminate the epistemic relationships children establish with texts. Moreover, examining epistemic injustice within educational settings and pedagogical practices could expand the theoretical framework developed in this study. The in-depth analysis of a single text aims to foreground the processual, experience-based, and critical nature of childhood knowledge in detail.

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