



THE ROLE OF FOLKLORE IN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESS

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Abstract

This article discusses certain peculiarities of using folklore units in FLT process, step by step analysis of the use of folk stories to different level of language learners. It is stated that to be fully aware or fluent in one language a learner should know cultural traits of the foreign language to be taught. This may help them practice the real native foreign life. Depending on the level of our students, the choice of folklore types can be changed. The high availability of folk literature may lead to productive English teaching classes.

Key words: folk tales, stories, folk literature, language learning process, cultural traits, oral traditions, interesting and productive classes, myths, legends

Every nation has its deep-rooted traditions, literature and culture. Since the first steps of language teaching period, less attention has been paid to the folklore of English nation than needed. Real lifestyle of native speakers has always been full of secrets and bizarre cultural traits, it is widely believed that to know and understand one nation, first and foremost attention should be paid to the history of that nation. It is agreed and accepted by many scholars that the changes and development of the English character, language, history and culture are inseparable part of language teaching and learning process. Folklore is a collection of fictional [stories](#) about [animals](#) and people, of cultural [myths](#), jokes, songs, tales, and even quotes. It is a description of culture, which has been passed down verbally from generation to generation, though many are [now](#) in written form. Folklore is also known as “folk literature,” or “oral traditions.” Folklore has enormous moral ethics values and it is one of the best tools for developing foreign language skills, broaden mind and developing research activities of students. [2] Myths, proverbs, sayings, stories help learners improve their speaking, reading, logical and critical thinking skills. When these kinds of folks are used in the classroom, learners not only obtain certain knowledge, but also they feel more confident to use the language in their daily speeches.

Currently, 4 skills are required from language learners, in turn lots of patterns of cultural lessons are presented online or in-person. If we only take the instances of language learning processes of young learners, they are easily made be interested in language with help of legends or cartoons that are set based on folk stories, myths. As parents, we probably used these stories to amuse our kids and prepare them for sleeping and to somehow teach them something that was encoded in the story, some sort of moral or hidden teaching, which is part of our children’s enculturation.[3]

As suggested by Rodriguez (quoted by Samovar, Porter, & McDaniel 2010), “Folktales are not only regarded as some of the best keepers of our language and cultural memories, they are also helpers in the process of socialization.” Through this process of socialization and/or enculturation, we the culture outsiders, along with our students, can get to see what a culture labels as important, irrelevant, funny,



ironic, sarcastic, etc. All these can be taught to language students in class to be better fit to interact with the target culture, and even with any other culture the learners are bound to encounter in their future. Depending on the level of our students, the choice of folklore types can be changed. Little poems, folk stories, folktales (with easy language) can be given to the younger generation of language learners, while legends with advanced content and context can be used with older age groups and higher leveled groups. As Rabbidge and Lorenzetti stated besides the 4 skills, students may have involuntary acquisition of vocabulary. [4]

The high availability of folk literature may lead to productive English teaching classes. They can be taken from every internet resource easily, the content of folk literature is rich in real native life. Daily use of folk tales may serve as an effective tool for making language teaching process more interactive, interesting and the learners feel never bored. As folk stories have no authors, they have no one personal approach or someone's personal opinions. As a result, it also means that every reader can feel close to them, and when we tell them, we almost feel that we have written them. They can be communal stories, equally enjoyable, relaxing to everyone, that means both language users and language teachers(learners) may have an enjoying process. Teacher may work around basic structures but change the language according to the level of your group. [5] The message will still come across and the reading/listening/storytelling experience will be enjoyable on every level.

We have noticed several times that *Snow White*, *Sleeping Beauty* and *Little Red Riding Hood* are very similar stories, however they carry the same qualities like goodness, kindness, helping to the poor, love to living things, saying beautiful words and etc., The underlying structure is called the **deep structure** in structuralist narratology, and the variations in their representations form the **surface structure**. Vladimir Propp discovered these qualities when he studied Russian folktales. Particularly, using folk literature in Higher Education institutions can be the best one, because adult learners are more critical, perceptive and more logical users of language users. Whenever teacher use folklore samples in language teaching classes of higher education, they show more interest, attention and it can become a win-win situation, both teachers and students have informative and productive time. Also, for more advanced learners, folktales can be used as a pedagogical springboard to help them develop skills in using the target language to make critical or imaginative responses, and to explore language and culture simultaneously [6]

Folktales are always alive with language, they are like inseparable wings of a bird; they require each other. They can easily be adapted to the circumstances of society and culture. They touch the heart and psychology of learners closely, themes of honesty, kindness, generosity, jealousy, arrogance, greed nurture them. [7] The themes and issues raised in oral tales can be significant for all ages and all humanity, making them suitable for language learners of all age groups.

When folktales were written down and used as a way to introduce children to literature, words suitable for the child audience were often chosen. This may have led to a misperception that these tales are only for the child audience. Indeed, oral tales do appeal to children due to their relatively simple forms of language and a storyline with proper beginning, middle and end.



Folktales in their written forms may have some elaborate language features. Nevertheless, as conceptually oral stories, they still have features of oral language which make them more suitable for a storyteller to tell them orally and face-to-face with an audience, compared with other forms of literary texts such as novels or short stories.

Repetition in folktales helps learners to absorb language units easily, these qualities are represented both in the rhythmic language of folktales and children's stories and the illustrations that accompany the texts. Short episodes can be role - played by learners having fun. Plus, this can be a sweet life-long memory. There are lots of ways of implementing folks in language teaching process, one of them is translating folklore units. Translating can be gradually started with preparational tasks. And what is significant in this process is choosing suitable level for this process. In other words, familiarity with the underlying narrative structure and messages in a tale allows ESL/EFL learners to use more cognitive space to pay attention to the language features. [1]

As McKay stated there are three major boons of literature use as material in language teaching classrooms:

- Firstly, they demonstrate for learners the importance of language form to accomplish specific communicative purposes;
- Secondly, they provide an ideal basis for integrating different language
- Thirdly, they raise students' and teachers' cross-cultural awareness

If we take an instance of proverbs, they make a great motivation in various modes of communication, not only in best seller novels and the influential mass media, but also in the friendly chats and powerful speeches. [8] Working with proverbs and sayings at the lessons not only helps to diversify educational process and to make it brighter and more interesting, but also it helps to solve a number of very important problems: proverbs in the classroom can improve student's learning experiences, their language skills, and their understanding of themselves and the world.

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