

THE USE OF FOLK TALES TO DEVELOP CHILDREN'S CRITICAL THINKING IN ENGLISH CLASSES

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Abstract: *the article is devoted to discuss the ways certain major advantages in using folktales for teaching English as a foreign or second language (EFL). In particular, it is about the ways in which folktales can be useful for facilitating EFL/EFS learners in their understanding of the importance of language form to achieve specific communicative purposes, and also for enhancing their cross-cultural awareness. Moreover, folktales can help to develop children's critical and creative thinking which are the most sophisticated thing in learning a foreign language.*

Keywords: *folklore, folktales, language teaching and learning, primary English as foreign language classrooms, critical thinking process, creative thinking process, thinking skills, proverbs.*

What is the critical thinking itself? Why do we need it in teaching English as a foreign language? Critical thinking is considered as quality thinking, and it helps students improve their communication with other people, and it makes acquiring new knowledge, dealing with beliefs, attitudes, and ideas much easier. However, we know that in daily communication, we do not need critical or creative thinking to make a decision, but a number of situational clichés and functional information need much thinking to make a conclusion. Moreover, using critical thinking in the lessons makes learning process more enjoyable, interesting, and effective. It is, also, an outstanding method of memorizing themes, topics quickly.

That is why in order to make a class more interactive teachers try to use all means of folklore, especially tales and stories, because tales include a rich source of information of culture and a large imaginative input which make them ideal teaching tool in primary education. Tales mostly make children imagine while reading them, with the help of imagination they can develop their thought processes and emotional consciousness, which make a positive attitude to language learning. While reading stories to the class, teachers may ask some questions about the theme, events, characters and symbols of story and ask them to predict what will be next at the end of the plot. Such questions and activities help children to develop their basic communication skills and enlarge their English vocabulary. Moreover, these exercises promote critical thinking in young children which influences them to learn a language effectively.

We know that asking a seven-year pupil to think critically about a story given in a class, especially in a foreign language, is a complicated task, because they have not reached yet an intellectual level to express their own ideas and opinions. However, it is an appropriate age to begin to make learners to think critically and creatively, so using folklore in the classroom helps to make this process much easier and interesting. In addition, stories are mostly used in various ways in English teaching and learning classes from motivating them to supplementing course book coverage of themes in order to acquire the language easily. In the main, they are utilized in a class so as to introduce the language and expressions which support learners to enhance their learning skills.

A usual method of using folklore stories in the primary English classes can be a key lexis for children, because when they come across with such a word, they can easily recognize it in the context. Besides that, stories are useful not only for learning new vocabulary or lexis, but also for developing basic communication skills and enriching critical and creative thinking. For instance, when a teacher tells a tale to the class, he asks questions about actual facts; plot, main personages and events in the story which leads learners think and retell it by their own expressions. However, it should be considered that for children to be encouraged to think, teachers also have to think. It means that firstly, teachers should be motivators for pupils to encourage them to read stories and imagine highly, because imagination is a first and main key procedure to acquire a new foreign language properly. The following tale can be an example of the using folklore in English as a foreign language class:

Why the sun and the moon live in the sky¹

Many years ago, the sun and water were great friends, and they both lived on the earth together. The sun very often used to visit the water, but the water never returned the visits. At last the sun asked the water why he never visited. The water replied that the sun's house was not big enough, and that if he came with all his people, he would drive the sun out of his home.

The water then said, "If you want me to visit you, you will have to build a very large house. But I warn you that it will have to be very large, as my people are numerous and take up a lot of room". The sun promised to

¹ https://www.worldoftales.com/English_folktales.html/

build a very large house, and soon afterwards, he returned home to his wife, the moon, who greeted him with a broad smile. The sun told the moon what he had promised the water, and the next day, they began building a large house to entertain the water and all his people. When it was completed, the sun asked the water to come and visit him.

When the water arrived, one of his people called out to the sun, and asked him whether it would be safe for the water to enter, and the sun answered, "Yes, tell my friend to come in."

The water began to flow in, followed by the fish and all the other water animals. Very soon, the water was knee-deep in the house, so he asked the sun if it was still safe, and the sun again said, "Yes," so more of them came in. When the water was at the level of a man's head, the water said to the sun, "Do you want more of my people to come?" Not knowing any better, the sun and the moon both said, "Yes," More and more of the water's people came in, until the sun and the moon had to sit on top of the roof. The water once again asked the sun if it was still okay to keep coming in. The sun and moon answered yes, so more and more of the water's people came in. The water soon overflowed the top of the roof, and the sun and the moon were forced to go up into the sky. ...and they have been there ever since

Supporting learners to become better critical and creative thinkers does not mean a great change in what and how we teach, firstly, we should change our thinking about it, the lesson does not be so informative that makes it boring, but it should be natural, familiar and fun enough which is designed with stories, tales and folklore, as well. If pupils love reading stories, tales, they will love communicating with society, retelling them, and making a lot of friends, because they will become sociable, sensitive and friendly with the help of folklore. "Asking the right questions and providing the necessary support for them to answer will allow children to develop their thought processes. It is about making people think and that means teachers as well as children. By making education more thinking-centered, we will be better preparing ourselves and the children we teach for the challenges life holds" (2, 25). An effective teaching method is much more than transferring knowledge from a teacher to a student. Knowledge can be only information for brain, but feelings, emotions, such as, love, kinship, friendship which can be found in stories and folklore may impact on learner's attitude to life positively, it is a huge change in teaching and learning.

Even folktales are used for helping learners develop competencies in language, so they are now widely used as pedagogical resources and materials in English as a foreign language classes. Taking all into account, it is stated that integrating folklore with the primary English lesson is both demanding and valuable now, lessons with folktales, proverbs and sayings may be effective for not only language learning, but also learning moral values. Folklore gives a great opportunity to students to get high motivation and inspiration to learn a language which is the most sophisticated task in language teaching.

References

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