



Russian and Tatar Fairy-Tales as a Means of Language Learning

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Abstract

Reading fairy tales aloud is a great way to improve the pronunciation of your language, as they are meant to be spoken and heard by others. By offering an interesting and novel topic for class discussion, which could encourage shy or more creative students to speak up, they can also improve the speaking skills of students. During the study, polling methods, interviews, and content analysis were used. It has been found that more consideration was given to the conflict itself in Russian fairy-tales, and to pre-conflict and post-conflict – in Tatar fairy-tales. The predominant behavioural strategy is a confrontation; the most successful tactics are cunning, fleeing from the place of conflict and reliance on a support group. Little attention is given to the emotions of the characters. In general, the fairy-tales examined to provide a limited set of conflict management practices. However, the combination of Russian and Tatar fairy-tales significantly enriches it.

Keywords: Fairy-Tale; Conflict; Predominant Behavioural Strategy; Behavioural Tactics in Conflict; Emotional Intelligence.

1. Introduction

For effective language learning and teaching, it is necessary to pay due attention to both learner abilities and learner assumptions. Students should be given the opportunity to clarify and assess their preferences in support of this idea, especially with regard to the definition of goals in general and awareness of learning strategies. A great way to enhance the pronunciation of language is to read fairy tales aloud, as they are meant to be spoken and heard by others. They can also improve the speaking skills of students by offering an interesting and novel topic for class debate, which could encourage shy or more creative students to speak up (Afanasev, Breeva, & Osmukhina, 2019; Marsova Kazantseva & Izanloo, 2019; M Khabutdinova, I Mingazova, & Mashakova, 2019). If there is one genre that has captured the imagination of people around the world in all walks of life, it is the fairy tale. And we still have great trouble understanding how it developed, formed, and spread — or why so many people, no matter how it changes or what shape it takes, cannot resist its appeal. Fairy-tales have been examined in many studies. Typically, fairy-tales are considered from the perspective of literary criticism (Nikiforov, 2008), philology (Khromenkov, 2016), psychology (Jung, Jung-Merker, & Rűf, 1976), history (V. Ya Propp, 1998), semiotics (Barthes, 2011). The conflictological review of fairy-tales is underrepresented today, due to the conflict studies has emerged relatively recently as a scientific field.

An example of a folklore genre that takes the form of a short story is a fairy tale. Typically, such stories include entities such as dwarfs, dragons, elves, fairies, giants, gnomes, goblins, griffins, mermaids, speaking animals, trolls, unicorns, or witches, and usually enchantments or magic. There is no clear line in most cultures that separates myth from folk or fairy tale; all of these together form the literature of preliterate societies. Fairy tales can be distinguished from other folk narratives, such as legends (which usually include belief in the veracity of the events described) and specific moral tales, including fables of beasts (Akhmedova, 2020; Alchinova, Khusainova, & Yagafarova, 2019; Khabitovna, 2018). The word is often used in less technical ways to describe something blessed with uncommon happiness, as in a



"fairy-tale ending" or "fairy-tale romance" The term "fairy tale" or "fairy story" can also mean any far-fetched story or tall tale in colloquial terms; it is used in particular for any story that is not only not true, but may not be true. Legends are perceived as real; fairy tales may merge into legends, where the narrative is perceived as being grounded in historical truth by both tellers and listeners. Unlike legends and epics, however, fairy tales typically do not include more than superficial references to religion and real locations, people and events; instead of actual times, they take place "once upon a time". Fairy tales exist both in oral and written form; in the late 17th century, Madame d'Aulnoy first applied the word "fairy tale" to them (DeGraff, 1984). Many of the fairy tales of today have evolved from centuries-old myths that have appeared in various cultures around the world, with variations. It is especially difficult to trace the history of the fairy tale, since only the literary forms can survive. Nevertheless, according to researchers at universities in Durham and Lisbon, such stories can go back thousands of years, some more than 6,500 years ago in the Bronze Age (Bettelheim, 2010; Leach & Fried, 1949). Fairy tales are still published today, as are works derived from fairy tales. In different forms, folklorists have categorized fairy tales (Gray, 2009). One of the most notable is the Aarne-Thompson classification system and the Vladimir Propp morphological review (V. Propp, 1928; V. Propp & Fabre, 1982; Vladimir Yakovlevich Propp, 2012; Thompson, 1977). Other folklorists have interpreted the significance of the stories, but the meaning of the tales has not been definitively defined by any school. Although the fairy tale is a distinct genre within the broader category of folktale, a source of considerable controversy is the concept that marks a work as a fairy tale. The word itself comes from the translation, first used in her collection in 1697, of Madame D'Aulnoy's *Conte de fees* (Seifert, 2000; Slater, 1982). Popular speech mixes fairy tales with beast fables and other folktales, and scholars vary in the degree to which the appearance as a differentiator should be taken of fairies and/or similarly mythical creatures (e.g., elves, goblins, trolls, giants, massive dragons, or mermaids). In his *Morphology of the Folktale*, Vladimir Propp opposed the traditional distinction between "fairy tales" and "animal tales" on the grounds that there were fantastic elements and animals in many tales (V. Propp, 2010). Nevertheless, Propp used all Russian folktales categorized as Aarne-Thompson 300-749 folklore in a cataloguing method that made such a distinction to obtain a simple collection of tales to pick works for his study. His own research defined fairy tales by their plot elements, but that was criticized in itself as the study does not readily lend itself to tales that do not require a quest, and in addition, in non-fairy tale works, the same plot elements are found (Melnikova, Burenkova, Makayev, & Makayeva, 2020).

Fairy-tales have moved to the modern world and now remain one of the sources of information for children (Alker Jr, 1987; Jones, 2011; Mieder, 1987; Zipes, 2002). The new generation has to build relationships in a new reality, facing many new and old conflicts. And fairy-tales unite generations, children of Z generation (Gaidhani, Arora, & Sharma, 2019) find out about folklore in a family setting and in educational institutions. Although in the new conditions, the scope of fairy-tales is narrowing – fairy tales compete with television, the Internet, and social networks for the attention of children. Literature is needed by kids. In many other ways, literary and folk creations that enrich and enhance their limited lives and life experiences that are only shaped by their families and close surroundings that teach them concepts and values are very good and valuable guides for children. Only a few of these creations are folk and fairy tales, nursery rhymes, riddles, puzzles, lullabies, proverbs. In children's literature, nursery rhymes help improve language skills, riddles also help practice and improve language skills, and the growth of intelligence and fairy tales enhance the imagination of children. And after spending enough time with the heroes of the fairy tales and when it is time to meet the real world and heroes, children encounter stories and folk tales. The definition of a story in a dictionary is telling an event orally or verbally and describing a real or imaginary event in prose (Ghaedsharafi, Yamini, & Dehghan, 2019; Hashemian & Farhang-Ju, 2018; N Khreisat & Mugableh, 2020).

Despite all the changes, fairy-tales remain an integral element of education (Allamurodova & Rakhmanov, 2019; Banov, 2019; Negrila, 2019). It is known that the vast majority of fairy-tales are based on conflict (Carroll, 2012). On the one hand, fairy-tales are the reflection of the binarity and contradictions of the real social world. On the other hand, fairy-tales provide awareness and behavioural skills in conflict.

This research is an attempt to answer the following questions: do traditional fairy-tales meet the requirements of modern times? How do traditional fairy-tales help children to master their communication, conflict management skills to develop their emotional intelligence? Are there any features of conflict-related education of Russian and Tatar tales?

The research covers two stages. At the first stage, parents of 30 children aged 4-6 have been surveyed (the target sample was used – mixed by gender and nationality) and eight teachers of preschool educational institutions of the city



of Kazan (Tatarstan, Russia) have been interviewed. At the second stage, a content analysis of four fairy-tales has been carried out.

The study showed that the tales examined to provide a limited set of conflict management practices, the most successful are tactics of cunning and searching for support, the strategies of escape and rivalry. Little attention is given to the emotions of protagonists and antagonists. Thus, to reveal the entire conflictological capability of fairy-tales, the professional teaching maintenance of studying them is needed. And in this case, fairy-tales can become the basis of conflict-related educational programs for children.

This project is just the first step in exploring the conflictological capability of fairy-tales. Their entire conflictological capability can be revealed in further research of many more fairy-tales.

This project is merely the first step in exploring the conflictological ability of fairy-tales. In Russian fairy-tales, the conflict properly gets more time, while in Tatar fairy-tales pre-conflict and post-conflict period (possibly due to the layout of the author). Overall, in fairy-tales, post-conflict situations receive the least attention. As a rule, the cause of the conflict in Russian fairy-tales is the action of the protagonist, and in Tatar, the action of the antagonist. The strategy of rivalry results in success, concession and compromise in all fairy-tales, resulting in loss, collaboration and avoidance remaining outside the scope of fairy-tales. Protagonists have a greater variety of effective strategies than antagonists. The most successful tactics are cunning, relying on a support group and escaping from the conflict scene. Trying to reach a compromise, collaboration, open assertion of desires leads to loss.

1.1. Research Objective

The purpose of this study is to recognize the abilities of fairy-tales for children to improve conflict management practices.

2. Material and Methods

Applied research methods include polling, interviews, and content analysis of fairy-tales (Bahn & Hong, 2019; O'Dochartaigh, 2019). In the content analysis of fairy-tales, the emphasis was placed on establishing the causes of the conflict, the success or failure of the strategies and tactics of protagonists and the antagonists, and the type and emotional component of the conflict.

In identifying the type of conflict, classifications suggested by Coser (1998) and Deutsch (2011) were used. The analysis of conflict behavioural strategies is based on Thomas–Kilmann conflict mode instrument (Thomas & Kilmann, 2017).

3. Results and Discussion

It is important to pay due attention to both learner skills and learner assumptions for productive language learning and teaching. In support of this proposal, students should be given the opportunity to explain and discuss their interests especially with regard to the concept of priorities in general and knowledge of learning strategies. Telling fairy tales aloud is a perfect way to strengthen language pronunciation, since they are intended to be spoken and understood by others. By providing an exciting and novel subject for class discussion, which may allow shy or more imaginative students to speak up, they would also develop the speech skills of students. If there is one genre that in all walks of life has caught the imagination of individuals around the world, it is the fairy tale. And we also have great difficulty knowing how it originated, formed, and spread, or why so many individuals cannot avoid its attraction, no matter how it changes or what form it takes. In several studies, fairy-tales have been investigated. Usually, from the viewpoint of literary criticism, fairy-tales are considered. Nursery rhymes help develop language skills in children's books, riddles also help practice and improve language skills, and the development of intellect and fairy tales stimulate children's creativity. And after having ample time with fairy tale characters and when it's time to face the true world and heroes, kids come across stories and folk tales. Among Tatar fairy-tales, children most frequently mentioned: "Shurale" (a fairy-tale about a woodcutter and a forest spirit) and "Vodyanaya" (about a boy and a mermaid). The most popular Russian fairy-tales are "Kolobok" (about the journey of a gingerbread boy) and "Zaykina Izbushka" (about a Hare's attempt to get back his house, from which a Fox kicked him out). Interviews with teachers showed that the choice of Tatar fairy-tales is explained by the fact that they



are included in the educational program. These fairy-tales were edited by the great Tatar poet G. Tukai, and it is his poetic form that these works are familiar to children in. The opinions of young respondents about Russian fairy-tales were less unanimous: about 80% of children mentioned “Kolobok” (teachers said that “Kolobok” is included into the educational program), while “Zaykina Izbushka” took second place, not much ahead of other fairy-tales (Tables 1-4).

Table 1. *Fairy-tales show different temporal extent of the stages of conflict.*

Fairy-tale	Total number of words	Number of words describing pre-conflict	Number of words describing the conflict proper	Number of words describing post-conflict
“Shurale”	924 (100%)	506 (54,8%)	361 (39,1%)	56 (6,1%)
“Vodyanaya”	442 (100%)	162 (36,7%)	248 (56,1%)	32 (7,2%)
“Kolobok”	406 (100%)	98 (24,1%)	308 (75,9%)	0 (0%)
“Zaykina Izbushka”	432 (100%)	31 (7,2%)	391 (90,5%)	10 (2,3%)

Table 2. *Fairy-tales show children that the cause of the conflict can be both the actions of the protagonist and the actions of the antagonists.*

Fairy-tale	Actions of the protagonist	Actions of the antagonist
“Shurale”	Violation of the imaginary border – entering the forest where forest spirits live	
“Vodyanaya”	Stealing the golden comb from the antagonist	
“Kolobok”	Disobedience of the protagonist	The threat to eat the protagonist
“Zaykina Izbushka”		Seizure of the protagonist’s home

Table 3. *The analysis of the behavior of the characters in accordance with the classical thomas–kilmann model of behavioral strategies (Thomas & Kilmann, 2017) shows the priority of the confrontation strategy.*

Fairy-tale	The strategy of the protagonist	The strategy of the antagonist	Result (protagonist – antagonist)
“Shurale”	<u>Confrontation</u> (does not participate in a deadly game, insists that it is necessary to finish collecting firewood)	<u>Confrontation</u> (insists on the game which is fatal for the protagonist), <u>compromise</u> (agrees to help the protagonist collect firewood)	<u>Win – lose</u> (The protagonist saves his life and firewood. The antagonist is deprived of freedom of action and ridiculed by colleagues)
“Vodyanaya”	<u>Confrontation</u> (The protagonist steals the comb from Vodyanaya and runs home), <u>cession</u> (the mother of the protagonist returns the comb)	<u>Confrontation</u> (The antagonist insists on returning the stolen comb and chases the thief)	<u>Lose/win-win</u> (The protagonist loses the trophy, but saves his life and learns an important life lesson – “thou shalt not steal”. The antagonist gets her property back)
“Kolobok”	<u>Confrontation</u> (The protagonist continues the journey despite the intention of antagonists to eat him), <u>cession</u> (sings the song again at the request of the Fox)	<u>Confrontation</u> (Antagonists declare their intention to eat the protagonist openly. The Fox disguises her interest)	<u>Win, lose-lose, win</u> (Being in confrontation, the protagonist wins, his opponents lose. When the protagonist makes a concession, he loses, and the antagonist wins)
“Zaykina Izbushka”	<u>Cession</u> (The protagonist leaves his home under the pressure of the antagonist), <u>confrontation</u> (three failures and one successful attempt to get his home back)	<u>Confrontation</u> (The Fox kicks the Hare out of his home and resists the protagonist’s and his helpmates’ attempts to get his home back), <u>cession</u> (The Fox leaves the protagonist’s home)	<u>Lose, win-win, lose</u> (The protagonist loses when he responds with a concession or a weaker confrontation to the confrontation of the antagonist. The protagonist wins when he responds to the confrontation with repeating the antagonist’s behavioural model: death)

			threats are added to the assertion of claims)
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Table 4. *Fairy-tales represent 11 successful tactics of the protagonists and 2 failures, 8 successful tactics of the antagonists and 10 failures.*

Fairy-tale	The tactics of the protagonist	The tactics of the antagonist	Effectiveness of the tactics
“Shurale”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of the opponent’s interest • Cunning, hiding true intentions (seemingly having accepted the conditions of the antagonist, the protagonist asks him for help and makes it impossible for the antagonist to tickle him, pinching his fingers in the log) • Abuse (restriction of the physical freedom of the antagonist) • Hiding information (hiding his real name from the antagonist) • Leaving the scene of conflict (the protagonist goes home, leaving the immobilized antagonist at the scene of the conflict) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The open assertion of intentions (to tickle the protagonist to death) • Attempts to get a support group (calling for brothers) • Request for help (asks the protagonist to loosen his fingers) • Promises attempt to reach an agreement (leaving the protagonist and members of his family alone) • Begging • Crying 	All tactics of the protagonist are successful and result in victory. All tactics of the antagonist are failures and generally lead to defeat.
“Vodyanaya”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capturing an inseparable object (the golden comb) • Escaping from the scene of the conflict (the protagonist runs from the river to his house) • Returning the object of the conflict to the owner (the mother of the protagonist returns the comb) • Relying on a support group (the mother) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chasing the protagonist (from the river to the village where Vodyanaya is stopped by dogs) • The open assertion of claims (to return the comb) • Persistent chase and restatement of claims (Vodyanaya comes back again at night) 	All tactics of the antagonist are successful (except for the first chase when the third force – the dogs – intervenes). The tactics of the protagonist (capturing an object and escaping) are temporarily successful. Returning the object is nominally successful because the reluctance to deal with Vodyanaya is stronger than the desire to possess the golden comb. Relying on a support group is a successful tactic.
“Kolobok”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The open assertion of wishes (“don’t eat me”) • Cunning, hiding true intentions (the protagonist sings songs to antagonists to distract their attention) • Leaving the scene of the conflict, escaping (the protagonist leaves behind all the antagonists except the last one) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Threats (to eat the protagonist) • The open assertion of wishes (“I will eat you”) • Cunning (hiding true intentions – to eat the protagonist – under the request to sing the song again) 	The tactics of cunning are successful both for the protagonist and the antagonist. The tactics of threats, accepting and fulfilling the opponent’s requests are clearly ineffective. The effectiveness of the tactics of the open assertion of wishes is ambiguous.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting and fulfilling the antagonist`s requests (to sing the song again) 		
“Zaykina Izbushka”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting and fulfilling the antagonist`s requests (to let overnight) • Crying • Leaving the scene of the conflict • Informing others about what happened • Relying on a support group (dogs, a bear, a bull, a rooster) • Threats (to abuse the antagonist) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cunning (to seize the home of the protagonist under colour of request for help) • Capturing the object of the conflict (the home of the protagonist) • Threats (to abuse the protagonist and his support group) • Delaying the decision-making, attempt to gain extra time • Returning the object of the conflict • Escaping from the scene of the conflict 	All tactics of the protagonist were successful (the tactics of informing did not bring success immediately). Successful tactics of the antagonist are cunning and threats (except for the last episode when meeting a brave rival).

Successful protagonist`s tactics include (conditionally successful tactics, which do not always result in success, are noted *):

- Clarification of the opponent`s interest
- Cunning, hiding true intentions – 2 fairy-tales
- Abuse
- Hiding information
- Leaving the scene of the conflict * – 4 fairy-tales
- The open assertion of wishes
- Crying *
- Informing others about what happened *
- Relying on a support group – 2 fairy-tales
- Threats *
- Returning the object of the conflict to the owner *

Successful antagonist`s tactics include:

- Chasing the protagonist
- The open assertion of claims
- Persistence
- Cunning – 2 fairy-tales
- Capturing the object of the conflict

- Threats
 - Delaying the decision-making, attempt to gain extra time *
- Unsuccessful tactics of the protagonist include:
- Accepting and fulfilling the antagonist`s requests – 2 fairy-tales
 - Capturing an inseparable object.
- Unsuccessful tactics of the antagonist include:
- Attempts to get a support group
 - Request for help
 - Promises attempt to reach an agreement
 - Begging
 - Crying
 - The open assertion of claims
 - Threats
 - The open assertion of wishes
 - Returning the object of the conflict
 - Escaping from the scene of the conflict.

In fact, the emotional component of conflict is the most important one (Shapiro, 2017).

Table 5. *In the fairy-tales studied, the emotions of the characters are often impossible to identify. Presumed emotions, based on the context of the fairy-tale, are noted * in the chart below.*

Fairy-tale	The protagonist`s emotions	The antagonist`s emotions
“Shurale”	Amazement/fear. *anxiety, joy, elation	*excitement, interest, astonishment, despair, anger, shame
“Vodyanaya”	Fear Shame *joy, hope	Fear *rage, joy
“Kolobok”	*joy	*anger, joy
“Zaykina Izbushka”	Fear *sadness, joy, despair, hope	*fear, anger, joy

4. Summary and Conclusions

Two stages are covered by the research. Parents of 30 children aged 4-6 were surveyed in the first stage (the target sample was used, mixed by gender and nationality) and eight teachers were interviewed from pre-school educational institutions in the city of Kazan (Tatarstan, Russia). A content analysis of four fairy-tales was carried out in the second stage.

The study revealed that the tales analysed to include a limited range of conflict management practices are the most powerful cunning and support-seeking methods, escape strategies, and rivalry. The emotions of the protagonists and antagonists receive little attention. Thus, the professional teaching maintenance of studying them is necessary to reveal the entire conflictological capability of fairy-tales. And in this situation, fairy-tales can become the basis of children's conflict-related educational programs.

This project is just the first step in the exploration of fairy-tales' conflictological ability. The conflict proper receives more time in Russian fairy-tales, whereas pre-conflict and post-conflict period – in Tatar fairy-tales (possibly due to the author`s layout). In general, post-conflict situations receive the least attention in fairy-tales. As a rule, in Russian

fairy-tales, the cause of the conflict is about the action of the protagonist, in Tatar, it is about the action of the antagonist. In all fairy-tales, the strategy of rivalry results in success, concession and compromise result in loss, cooperation and avoidance remain outside the scope of fairy-tales. Protagonists have a wider range of successful tactics than antagonists. Cunning, relying on a support group and escaping from the scene of the conflict are the most successful tactics. Attempts to reach a compromise, cooperation, open assertion of wishes result in loss. The fact that the same tactics can lead to both escalation and de-escalation of the conflict, can be successful and unsuccessful, is compliant with the position of Kriesberg (2016). The main emotion represented by protagonists and antagonists is fear. Emotions are not identified at all frequently.

According to the classification by L. Coser, all the four conflicts studied are realistic and imply the possibility of an alternative way to resolve them. According to the classification by M. Deutsch, all conflicts are “genuine”. All conflicts end with dissension.

The conflictological capability of fairy-tales is undoubtedly significant, but it needs professional teaching maintenance when studying them because pre- and post-conflict situations receive little attention. Children see realistic and genuine conflicts only, those ending with dissension, and it is difficult for them to get the entire big picture, to learn and believe in any strategies other than rivalry. The set of tactics is quite limited, and such popular practices as negotiations, compromise, cooperation, the open assertion of interests often result in loss. Fairy-tales often teach to be afraid of conflict; the identification of emotions is usually contextual. However, it is certain that immersion into Russian and Tatar fairy-tales enriches children's awareness of problematic situations and conflict management practices.

4.1. Contribution

This study of fairy-tales linked to conflict can lead to the growth of children's mental ability, soft skills, emotional and social intelligence.

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