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## THE LITERARY FAIRY TALE AS A LINGUODIDACTIC RESOURCE IN FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING

**Abstract.** *This article explores the potential of using English literary fairy tales as a linguodidactic resource when working with students in non-humanities fields. The linguistic and cultural, sociocultural, moral and ethical, and organizational and pedagogical potential of this approach is analyzed in detail.*

**Keywords:** *literary fairy tale, student theater studio, English language, video project, drama practice.*

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## ЛИТЕРАТУРНАЯ СКАЗКА КАК ЛИНГВОДИДАКТИЧЕСКИЙ РЕСУРС В РАБОТЕ ПРЕПОДАВАТЕЛЯ ИНОСТРАННОГО ЯЗЫКА

**Аннотация:** *В статье рассматривается возможность использования английской литературной сказки как лингводидактического ресурса в работе со студентами негуманитарного профиля обучения. Детально анализируются лингвострановедческий, социокультурный, нравственно-этический и организационно-педагогический потенциал этого направления деятельности.*

**Ключевые слова:** *литературная сказка, студенческая театральная студия, английский язык, видео проект, драматика.*

Foreign language teaching at present is developing in accordance with the social order of society, in which knowledge of this language is in demand. Along with traditional forms and methods that ensure the assimilation of a full range of knowledge and skills, pedagogical techniques that allow one to go beyond the usual training in listening, speaking or reading, expanding the opportunities for students to acquire linguistic, cultural and sociocultural knowledge are becoming increasingly popular. Modern students, especially students of non-humanitarian studies, are often left out of working with authentic texts, audio and video materials that represent the treasury of the world cultural heritage, which deprives them of the potential inherent in the human cultural code by many generations of great creators.

The appeal of a foreign language teacher to a literary fairy tale is an attempt to interest students not only in the assessment or program knowledge of the subject, but also to introduce their “wards” to the beauty of the language, its richness, the depth of ideals and values of the entire people of the country of the language being studied. A

literary fairy tale is considered a genre that has absorbed folklore and literary principles. From the moment of its appearance until the beginning of the 20th century, the literary fairy tale was intended more often for an adult reader. It is a reflection of the era in which it was written and the prevailing literary trends of that time. A literary fairy tale reflects the author's personal view of the world, his idea of life and justice.

Let us turn to the experience of working with this English-language material at the Faculty of Computer Science of Voronezh State University. The very first attempt to include the "literary component" of the new format in the outline of the lesson was watching an animated film from the series "The World of Peter Rabbit and Friends", based on the fairy tales of the English artist and writer Beatrix Helen Potter. The audience were 1st year students with pre-intermediate level of English.

The freshman training program includes working with "general English". The cartoon was of excellent quality, lasted about ten minutes, and did not require prior lexical preparation. The story that was chosen for viewing was called "Two Bad Mice". Despite the fact that audio perception was not particularly difficult, the text contained words and phrases that were unfamiliar to most students: muslin curtains, full of shavings, doll's perambulator, nursery, skirting-board, oilcloth, hearth-rug, at the cheese monger's, the tongs and the shovel, plaster, red-hot crinkly paper fire, soot, chest of drawers, bolster, small odds and ends, landing, pots and pans, mouse-trap, dust-pan, broom. The list of words was offered to students in the handout for review immediately before viewing. Themes outlined in the fairy tale are My House, Food. The post-screening task was, at the students' choice, to talk about the work of a world-famous artist and writer or to retell the story (including the above vocabulary in the retelling). The students completed both tasks with interest. Their answers were not repeated, but complemented each other. Students of the next "generations" read this fairy tale by Beatrix Potter in roles, made a film-presentation-retelling of the fairy tales using the artist's drawings, having previously learned their lines by heart.

Elements of theatricalization have become a means of developing linguistic and cultural competence among students of non-linguistic specialties, additional

motivation to improve the phonetic component of speech, awareness of the intonation pattern of statements, mastering thematic vocabulary, and individual grammatical constructions. Live speech is not a verbal text in its pure form. It includes facial expressions, gestures, and elements of acting. For participants in dramatic practice, English has ceased to be “another subject” among the compulsory ones. Interest in working with language remained and increased after the end of the “theatrical experiment”.

Beatrix Potter's fairy tales are unique. All of them are anthropomorphic, that is, they describe the behavior of animals (rabbits, mice, frogs, hedgehogs, squirrels) that are people in situations that are real to people. At the same time, people also act in fairy tales, being a force more powerful, but less “flexible” and adaptable than the main characters of the story. Each story implies a “moral”, summing up the actions of the characters. Each fairy tale is a generalized model-representation of a typical situation characteristic of the way of life of the English man in the 19th-20th century. The lexical content of individual plots allows you to immerse yourself in the atmosphere of the description “with your head.” Thus, in “The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse”, the plot is borrowed from Aesop’s parable about the city and country mice with detailed “pictures” of the life of townspeople and villagers: “the cook gave the carrier the sixpence ... there was no quiet; there seemed to be hundreds of carts passing. Dogs barked; boys whistled in the street; the cook laughed, the parlour maid ran up and down-stairs; and a canary sang like a steam engine”. Reading this work provokes a discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of urban and rural habitats with a final project presentation. An additional bonus for groups actively working on the material is watching the feature film “Miss Potter” (2006), or “The Tales of Beatrix Potter” (ballet) (1971).

Drama/theatrical productions occupy a very special place in working with “fairy-tale material”. As experience shows, theater studio practice significantly motivates students’ extracurricular foreign language activities, their interest in works of English-language literature, music, visual and theatrical arts, and gives them the opportunity to

creatively interpret the events described and the characters depicted. The effectiveness of the teaching and educational potential of the “foreign language” subject increases many times over.

Among the performances staged by the student theater studio in English “CATS' House” (Creative Artistic Talented Students' House) of Voronezh State University, a special place is occupied by a performance dedicated to the works of Oscar Wilde, including his fairy tales with their very rich psychological, linguistic, spiritual and educational content: *The Selfish Giant*, *The Devoted Friend*, *The Remarkable Rocket*. In “*The Remarkable Rocket*,” the author uncompromisingly exposes the pomposity and emptiness of the nobility who are proud of their aristocracy. In “*The Selfish Giant*” and “*The Devoted Friend*,” he shows how selfishness and indifference can destroy all life around them, deprive the very existence of this world, how generosity and love elevate and restore meaning to our existence.

The main task of Oscar Wilde's fairy tales is to educate and expand the semantic component of such important moral concepts as gentleness, mercy, and humanity. Along with sarcastic ridicule of the shortcomings of an unjust world, they contain "a passionate message of kindness, compassion and beauty."

The general philosophical idea in the works of O. Wilde is conveyed through a variety of stylistic techniques that create a unique atmosphere of the work and set the rhythm of the entire narrative. Wilde's works are replete with a variety of lexical devices. Thanks to the writer's precisely chosen words, we can hear the howling of the winter wind, the sound of hail on the roof, feel the chilling breath of the cold, and see a blooming garden. Everything that Oscar Wilde depicts is incredibly precise, painterly and exquisite.

Staged work on the material of fairy tales allows students (and teachers) to experience the subtle psychologism of the relationships between the characters. Without listening to the moral teachings of their elders about “what is good and what is bad,” students themselves draw conclusions, which can subsequently become a measure of the morality of their own behavior. “Little Hans had a great many friends,

but the most devoted friend of all was big Hugh the Miller. Indeed, so devoted was the rich Miller to little Hans, that he would never go by his garden without leaning over the wall and plucking a large bunch of flowers, or a handful of sweet herbs, or filling his pockets with plums and cherries if it was the fruit season.”

The student theater studio in English “CATS’ House” has produced five major performances. But first the pandemic, and then a special military operation, reduced the possibilities and changed the mood of the organizers of the theatre workshop. Large-scale performances have become the history of the “CATS’ House” project. However, in the 2022-2023 academic year, the theatre project at Voronezh State University was carried out in an updated format. At the Faculty of Computer Science, a video project called “CATS’ Studio” continued student theatre practice. The film “WHILE TRAVELING WITH KIPLING” was prepared and filmed based on four fairy tales by Rudyard Kipling: How the Camel Got His Hump, How the Rhinoceros Got His Skin, How the Elephant Got His Nose, How the Whale Got His Throat. Students from four first-year groups (59 people in total) took part in the shooting of the film. The work was completed in the summer of 2023 and was dedicated to the 105th anniversary of Voronezh State University. This project takes into account the creative and educational potential of previous large projects.

The most difficult thing in creativity is motivation. How to help students, accustomed to sitting at a computer day and night, break away from their favorite or vital activity for a completely unfamiliar “stuff”. The first step is always the most difficult. Among the students, we were looking for future participants - like-minded people who read books, acted on stage, sang, dance, shot videos, and loved theater. The next step was the search and arrangement of the texts. In each group, fairy tales were distributed for independent reading by each student. Then the fairy tales were retold in Russian in class (5 minutes per fairy tale) - so the future actors became acquainted with all of Kipling's fairy tales during one lesson. During the retelling, we saw the “actors”. Then the chosen fairy tale was read in English (reading and translation was homework). In each group, we found those willing to transform the fairy tale into a script (a very

difficult job). At the stage of distribution of roles, the participants got divided into active and passive – so creating roles for each member of the academic group became inevitable. The roles of “trees”, “stove”, and a whole host of “storytellers” appeared. The roles were learned by heart. Although, unfortunately, not everyone turned out to be conscientious in this case. Therefore, during filming, it was sometimes allowed to peek into the text.

Each group had its own sound and video director. There were editors who assembled films from scattered pieces. We finished filming and editing individual fairy tales in June, and watched the overall film in September - at the first meeting in class. After that, participants were asked to write a review indicating what they approved and what didn't like. Here is one of such reviews – by the second-year student of the Faculty of Computer Science Polina Shapiro: "The joint creation of this performance was an event that united us with our groupmates. Within the framework of a regular curriculum, there are really not so many tasks that require collective participation. Often, we limit ourselves to individual tasks, and our contribution is evaluated solely on our own achievements, which can create a feeling of isolation.

However, the creation of the performance became a bridge for us to work together. At that moment, we stopped thinking only about our own contribution and began to think about how our work could benefit the whole team. This required us to interact better, understand each other's needs, and coordinate actions in order to achieve high-quality results. When each of us tried to do our part as efficiently as possible, and each member of the team put efforts into the common cause, we not only had a good time in the preparation process, but also achieved a good result. The creation of the play became a source of joy, and it was not only work, but also real creativity. In the end, looking through our own work, we couldn't help but smile at what we had done together :-)

This experience united us and left impressions that would remain in our hearts after graduation." Why were fairy tales chosen? Because they are easier to interpret and to play out the situation, hiding behind the mask of a cat or camel, external and internal transformation is possible. Unable to purchase ready-made costumes,

participants in mini-performances “made” them from hats, blankets, scarves, finding make-up artists, designers, and artists among their ranks. Each story received its own artistic embodiment. For each fairy tale a quote from Kipling was found, reflecting the main idea, the value guideline of the story: “There is no sin so great as ignorance. Remember this.” or “Gardens are not made by singing 'Oh, how beautiful!' and sitting in the shade.” The film featured Kipling's famous masterpiece "IF". The CATS’ Studio project has got a kind of continuation. In 2024, Russia celebrates the 225th anniversary of its main poet, writer, philosopher, historian, humanist - Alexander Sergeevich Pushkin. Participants in the “CATS’ Studio” are working on creating a video film with the working title “Bravo, Pushkin!” Fairy tales, poems and romances based on the poems of the great master will be performed in English and Russian, interpreted by students of Voronezh State University. First-year students at the university have an internship offered by the student activist group – team building. Team building supposes team formation, socialization, teaching students to adapt to a new team, come to each other’s aid in a difficult situation, and find like-minded people. Drama practice is a kind of team building. Of course, theatrical production is not an end in itself. The process of preparing for it is much more important than the result. Interaction with each other, getting to know world culture, thinking about serious social problems, the need to put oneself in the place of other people in other circumstances - that is the set of true educational and pedagogical tasks that drama pedagogy solves. It is important that there is a place in the student theater for all students, and not just for artistic children. Theater is expected to see and hear everyone. Involving students in the process of creativity in English is the organization of a multidimensional learning situation. A literary fairy tale is one of the ways to solving a complex of educational tasks facing a foreign language teacher.

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